



The Advent

It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth: His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness will be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be established in effect upon earth.

MARCH 30, 1914

THE MOTHER

The ADVENT

August 1947

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“ Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,
One day he shall create our life anew
And utter the magic formula of peace
And bring perfection to the scheme of things.
One day he shall descend to life and earth,
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors
Into a world that cries to him for help
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,
The joy that is the baptism of the soul,
The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love.
One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world's beating heart
And bare his secret body of light and bliss.”

Savitri, Part I, Book II, Canto 6

SRI AUROBINDO



This is the word that came to the Mother when she heard on the Radio the declaration of June 2, 1947 issued by the Viceroy to the leaders of Indian parties; it has been approved by Sri Aurobindo:

A proposal has been made for the solution of our difficulties in organising Indian independence and it is being accepted with whatever bitterness of regret and searchings of the heart by Indian leaders.

But do you know why this proposal has been made to us? It is to prove to us the absurdity of our quarrels.

And do you know why we have to accept these proposals? It is to prove to ourselves the absurdity of our quarrels.

Clearly, this is not a solution; it is a test, an ordeal which, if we live it out in all sincerity, will prove to us that it is not by cutting a country into small bits that we shall bring about its unity and its greatness; it is not by opposing interests against each other that we can win for it prosperity; it is not by setting one dogma against another that we can serve the spirit of Truth. In spite of all, India has a single soul and while we have to wait till we can speak of an India one and indivisible our cry must be:

Let the soul of India live for ever!

June 3, 1947

On nous a fait une proposition pour résoudre les difficultés que nous éprouvons à organiser une Inde indépendante et cette proposition a été acceptée, en dépit de toutes les amertumes et de tous les regrets.

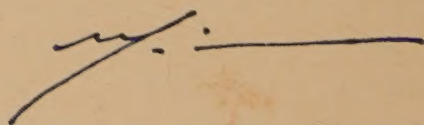
Mais savez-vous pourquoi on nous a proposé cela? Pour nous prouver l'absurdité de nos querelles.

Et savez-vous pourquoi il faut que nous acceptions cette proposition? Pour nous prouver à nous-même l'absurdité de nos querelles.

Ce n'est certes pas une solution, c'est une expérience, une épreuve nécessaire, une expérience qui nous prouvera, si nous la vivons sincèrement que ce n'est pas en coupant un pays en petits morceaux qu'on peut réaliser son unité et sa grandeur, ce n'est pas en opposant des intérêts qu'on peut obtenir la prospérité, ce n'est pas en dressant l'un contre l'autre les dogmes qu'on peut servir l'esprit de Vérité.

En dépit de tout et de tous l'Inde a une âme unique, et en attendant de pouvoir crier: "Vive l'Inde une et indivisible," nous proclamerons:

"Vive à jamais l'âme de l'Inde!"



Le 3 Juin 1947



The ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

Evolution of the Spiritual Consciousness

EVEN the Vedic Rishis used to refer to the ancients, more ancient than they themselves. "The ancients", they said, "worshipped Agni, we too the moderns in our turn worship the same godhead". Or again, "Thus spoke our forefathers"; or, "So have we heard from those who have gone before us" and so on.

Indeed, the tradition in the domain of spiritual discipline seems to have been always to realise once again what has already been realised by others, to rediscover what has already been discovered, to re-establish ancient truths. Others have gone before on the Path, we have only to follow. The teaching, the realisation is handed down uninterrupted through millenniums from Master to disciple. In other words, the idea is that the fundamental spiritual realisation remains the same always and everywhere: the name and the form only vary according to the age and the surroundings. The one reality is called variously, says the Veda. Who can say when was the first dawn! The present dawn has followed the track of the infinite series that has gone by and is the first of the infinite series that is to come. So sings Rishi Kanwa. For the core of spiritual realisation is to possess the consciousness, attain the status of the Spirit. This Spirit may be called God by the theist or Nihil by the Negativist or Brahman (the One) by the Positivist (spiritual). But the essential experience, of a cosmic and transcendental reality, does not differ very much. So it is declared that there is only one goal and aim, and there are, at the most, certain broad principles, clear pathways which one has to follow if one is to move in the right direction, advance smoothly and attain infallibly: but these have been well marked out, surveyed and charted and do not admit of serious alterations

and deviations. The spiritual aspiration is a very definite and unitary movement and its fulfilment is also a definite and invariable status of the consciousness. The spiritual is a typical domain, one may say, there is no room here for sudden unforeseen variation or growth or evolution.

Is it so in fact? For if one admits and accepts the evolutionary character of human nature and consciousness, the outlook becomes somewhat different. According to this view, human civilisation is seen as moving through progressive stages: man at the outset was centrally lodged in and occupied with his body consciousness, he was an *annamaya purusha*; then he raised himself and centred in the vital consciousness and so became fundamentally a *pranamaya purusha*; next he climbed into the mental consciousness and became the *manomaya purusha*; from that level again he has been attempting to go further beyond. On each plane the normal life is planned according to the central character, the law—*dharma*—of that plane. One can have the religious or spiritual experience on each of these planes, representing various degrees of growth and evolution according to the plane to which it is attached. It is therefore that the Tantra refers to three gradations of spiritual seekers and accordingly three types or lines of spiritual discipline: the animal (*pashu bhava*), the heroic (*vira bhava*) and the godly or divine (*deva bhava*). The classification is not merely typical but also hierarchical and evolutionary in character.

The Divine or the spiritual consciousness, instead of being a simple unitary entity, is a vast, complex stratified reality. "There are many chambers in my Father's mansion", says the Bible: many chambers on many stories, one may add. Also there are different levels or approaches that serve different seekers, each with his own starting-point, his *point de repère*. When one speaks of union with the Divine or of entering into the spiritual consciousness, one does not refer to the same identical truth or reality as any other. There is a physical Divine, a vital Divine, a mental Divine; and beyond the mind—from where one may consider that the region of true spirit begins—there are other innumerable modes, aspects, manifestations of the Divine.

As we say, there are not only aspects of the Divine, but there are also levels in him. The spiritual consciousness rises tier upon tier and each spur has its own view and outlook, rhythm and character. Now, as long as man was chiefly preoccupied with his physico-vital or mentalised physico-vital activities, as long as the burden of his body and life and even mind lay heavy on him and their gravitational pull was normally very strong, almost irresistible, the spiritual impulse in him acted generally and fundamentally as a movement of escape from them into *some* thing beyond. It was a negative movement on the whole and it was enough to dissociate, reject, sublimate the lower status and somehow rise into something which is

not that (*neti*): the question was not important at that stage of the human consciousness about a scientific scrutiny of the Beyond, its precise constitution and composition.

But once there is the possibility gained of a more normalised, familiar and wider reconnaissance of the Beyond, when the human being has been mentalised to a degree and in a manner that makes it inevitable for him to overpass to a higher status and live there habitually, then it becomes an urgent matter of concern to know and find out where one goes exactly, on which level and in what domain, once one is beyond. The question, it is true, engaged the attention of the ancients too; but it was more or less an interesting enquiry, a good part speculative and theoretical; it had not the reality and insistence of the need of the hour. We have today chalked out an almost exhaustive science of the inferior consciousness, of the lower hemisphere—of course, so far as it is possible for such a science to be exhaustive moving in the light of the partial and inferior consciousness. In the same way we need at the present hour a complete and precise science of the Divine Consciousness. As there is a logic of the finite, there is also a logic of the infinite, not merely its magic, and that too has to be discovered and laid out.

Thus, the highest and most comprehensive description of the Divine is perhaps the formula Sat-chit-ananda. But even so, it is a very general and, after all, an inadequate description. It has to be filled in and supplemented by other categories as well, if one may say so. For Sat-chit-ananda presents to us the Sat Brahman. There is also the Asat Brahman. And again we must accept a reality which is neither Sat nor Asat—*nasadāsīnno sadāsīt*, says the Veda. And as for the filling up of the details in an otherwise almost blank and featureless infinity, Sri Aurobindo's charting of that vast unknown—with the categories of the Supermind and its various levels, of the Overmind and its levels too, all forming the Divine Status and Consciousness—is a new, almost a revolutionary revelation, just the required science which the present world needs and demands and for which it has been prepared through all the cycles of evolution.

This means to say that with the knowledge that is given us today one can determine more or less definitely the altitudes to which the various spiritual realisations of the past rose and one can see also the degrees or graded stages of the evolution of the spiritual consciousness. A broad landmark can be noted here which concerns us at the present moment. The spiritual consciousness has been rising to higher and higher peaks and possessing them one after another. At the present moment we are at a crisis, at a crucial crossing. The spiritual consciousness attained till now and securely held in human possession (in man's inner nature) is confined to the highest level of the mind with some infiltration from the Overmind and through that,

as a springing board, a leap into an indefinite, almost a blank Beyond. Now the time is come and the conditions are ready for the spiritual consciousness in humanity to arrive at the status above the Overmind, the Supermind and make that a living reality and build in and through that its normal consciousness.

A progressive revelation of higher and higher and more integral states of the spiritual consciousness in and through the realisations of mystics and sages and seers—divine men—of all ages, such is the process of evolution that marks the life of man upon earth. This spiritual evolution, however, may not be obviously visible in the external life and character of man: it has been a phenomenon more in his inner being and consciousness, an occult phenomenon. Hence there has intervened a veil, a wall of separation between the two. The veil has not been rent precisely because the very highest spiritual potential has not been reached and brought into play. The call of the present age is just to do away with this veil, make of human nature a unified, a streamlined entity, a complete incarnation of the spiritual consciousness in the fullness of its own nature at its source and origin.

*At the Origin of Ignorance**

The Divine Consciousness, basically and essentially one and unique, has inherent in it four cardinal attributes—principles of its modulation, modes of its vibration—developing into or appearing as four aspects and personalities. They are Light, Force, Delight and Knowledge. Originally and in the supreme status the four movements are one and indivisible and form one indissoluble identity with the Divine's pure essence and absolute unity. The differentiation or variability there in the Immutable is a play immanent in the integral self-nature of the Supreme. The one and the many form on that level a single entity, an undivided whole: the unity running in and through and holding the multiplicity and the multiplicity being the play-fulness of the unity. Multiplicity however implies freedom of movement in the Unique. In other words the very character of variability is the absolute freedom of the variables; the play consists precisely in the free choice and self-determination of the partners, the differentiated units. For a formation in the Divine Consciousness, an individualised formulation of its being must necessarily have the Divine's own freedom. Now, the result of this freedom is somewhat unexpected, to put it in the human way, that is to say, it was not explicit at that point, in that field of consciousness. For the freedom

★ Based on a talk with the Mother.

in the normal course of its play, reached a degree or arrived at a mode which brought about a shift and an impulsion meaning a rift and a clear separation: the momentum of the free movement carried the individual formation beyond the range of its sense of unity and identity with all and the One. More and more it isolated itself, limiting itself to its own orbit and to its own fund of energy. This isolation, it must be noted, occurs at the origin without any sense of perversity or revolt or disobedience on the part of the free entity, as the legend formulated by the human mind imaged it. The movement of freedom and individual formation in its urge crosses, as it were, a borderline, passes from the safe zone within the Divine's own status into a different zone, creates it, as a matter of fact, by that overzealous and self-concentrated free movement. But, as I have said, there is no premeditation or *arrière pensée* or "bad will" or spirit of contradiction there at the origin of the deviation. It is no original sin: it is a spontaneous, almost a logical consequence, an inevitable expression of the freedom that particulars enjoy as part and parcel of the Divine Universal.

And yet the result is strange and revolutionary. The game once begun develops its own scheme and pattern and modality. For that crucial step in the movement of freedom, that definite moving away, the assertion of complete independence and isolation immediately brought about a reversal of realities, a complete negation of the original attributes. Thus Light became obscurity or Inconscience, Life became death, Delight became pain and suffering, Power became incapacity, Knowledge became Ignorance, and Truth became falsehood. In other words, Spirit became forthright Matter.

What seemed, however, to be nothing more than an accident is pregnant nevertheless with a profound meaning and significance. Indeed God has not created the world in fun. Spirit became Matter, that is to say, an apparent negation of the Spirit, to demonstrate that the negation is a way of affirmation, a more integral way of affirmation of the Spirit. Matter has been brought out to express another poise of the spirit, spirit concretised and embodied.

The Soul of a Nation[★]

A nation is a living personality; it has a soul, even like a human individual. The soul of a nation is also a *psychic* being, that is to say, a conscious being, formation out of the Divine Consciousness and in direct contact with it, power and aspect of Mahashakti. A nation is not merely the sum total of

★ Based on a talk with the Mother.

the individuals that compose it, but a collective personality of which the individuals are as it were cells, like the cells of a living and conscious organism. The psychic being or soul of a nation is indeed conscious; it knows its *raison d'être*, its life purpose, its destiny, the role it has to play in the Divine scheme as the Divine instrument. And its will—for it has a will, the expression of its consciousness, the Divine's impulse in and through it—is inevitable, sooner or later it will fulfil itself. Even like the soul of a man, the nation's soul is behind all the movements that form its external life, supporting, building, guiding its political, economic, social or cultural make-up. The individual can know of and come in contact with the nation's soul in and through his own soul. When one becomes conscious of his psychic being then only one is in a condition to be conscious of the psychic being of the collective person of his nation or the nation with which he has inner affinity.

There are periods in the life cycle of a nation, critical moments, when it is in deadly peril, when its very existence is threatened, attacked by enemy forces either from within or from without. Such was the case when, for example, Britain was invaded by the Spanish Armada or when France was being subjugated by England. Those were very anxious times, but in each instance the soul of the nation came forward and inspired the nation to react and go through the ordeal and survive. Jeanne Darc may be considered as the embodiment of France's national soul, as on a still earlier occasion that same soul embodied in St. Geneviève. But a nation may fall on much more evil days, namely, when it loses contact with its very soul and goes astray, its life movement taking a wrong curve. A nation can deny its soul, even as an individual may and the result is disaster. Germany is a terrible example of such a tragedy in our own day.

India is offering a spectacle of another tragedy. What is happening here is the attack of a disease that is convulsing the body politic: it seems to be a cancerous disease, the limbs seeking to grow independently at the expense of each other. The patient is passing through a very critical period and it is indeed a question of life and death. But we hope—we are sure—that the soul of this ancient nation will assert itself and through whatever vicissitudes re-establish health and harmony: for that soul's mission is yet to be done.

Like the individual a nation too dies. Ancient Greece and Rome, Egypt and Babylon and Chaldea are no more. What has happened to their souls, it may be asked. Well, what happens to the soul of the individual when the body falls away? The soul returns to the soul-world. Like the individual Psyche the collective Psyche too goes and retires into the womb of peace and light with all its treasures, its beauty and glory gathered in, like a bird that goes to sleep within its folded wings. What the Greek culture and civilization as still continues to exist in its quintessential reality in a world to

which one has access if one has the requisite kinship of consciousness and psychic opening. That soul lives in its own domain, with all the glory of its achievement and realisation at their purest; and from there it sheds its lustre, exerts its influence, acts as a living leaven in the world's cultural heritage and spiritual growth.

When however the soul withdraws, when a nation in a particular cycle of its soul manifestation has fulfilled its role and mission, the body of the nation falls gradually into decadence. The elements that composed the organic reality, the living consistency of national life disintegrate, lose their energy and cohesive capacity; they die out and are dispersed or persist for a time as a confused mixture of disconnected and mechanically moving cells. But it may happen too that in an apparently dying or dead nation, the soul that retired comes back again, not in its old form and mode of life—for that cannot be—Egypt, if it lives again today cannot repeat the ages of the Pharoas and the Pyramids—but in a new personality, with a fresh life purpose. In such a case what happens is truly a national resurrection—a Lazarus coming back to life at the touch of the Divine.

We do not believe that India was ever completely dead or hopelessly moribund: her soul, although not always in front, was ever present as a living force, presiding over and guiding her destiny. That is why there is a perennial capacity for renewal in her and the capacity to go through dire ordeals. And to live up to her genius, she too must know how to march with the times, that is to say, not to cling to old and past forms—to be faithful to the ancient soul does not mean eternising the external frames and formulas that expressed that soul one time or another. Indeed the soul becomes alive and vigorous when it finds a new disposition of the life plan which can embody and translate a fresh creative activity, a new fulfilment emanating from the depths of the soul.

The Body Natural

With regard to the food that man takes, there are two factors that determine or prescribe it. First of all, the real need of the body, that is to say, what the body actually requires for its maintenance, the elements to meet the chemical changes happening in it, something quite material and very definite, viz., the kind of food and the quantity. But usually this real need of the body is obscured and submerged under the demands of another kind of agency, almost altogether foreign to it, (1) vital desire and (2) mental notions. Indeed, the menu of our table, at least 90% of it, is

★Based on a talk with the Mother.

arranged so as to satisfy the demands of the second category, the consideration that should come first comes last in fact. The body is at present a slave of the mind and the vital; it is hardly given the freedom of choosing its own requirements in the right quantity and quality. That is why the body is seen to suffer everywhere and is normally sick for the greater part of its earthly existence. It has been compelled to occupy an anomalous position in the human organism between these two tyrants. The vital goes by its greed, its attraction and repulsion, its impulse to excess (sometimes to its opposite of deprivation); what it has been accustomed to, what it has taken a fancy for, to that it clings, and if the body has not what it prescribes, it throws the suggestion into the body that it will become sick. The same with the mental factor. The physical mind has its own notions and schemes, pet ideas and plans (perhaps from what has been read in books or heard from persons) in respect of the body's needs; it thinks that if a certain prescription is not followed, the body will suffer. The mind and the vital are thus close friends and accomplices in regimenting the body. They impose their own demands and prejudices upon the body which helplessly gets entangled in them and loses its native instinct. The body left to itself is marvellously self-conscious; it knows spontaneously and unfailingly what is good for its health and strength. The animals usually, especially those of the forest, maintain still the unspoilt body instinct; for they have no mind to tyrannise over the body nor is their vital of a kind to go against the normal demands of the body. The body, segregated from the mind and the vital, very easily can choose the right kind of food and the right quantity and even vary them according to the varying conditions of the body. Common sense is an inherent attribute of the body consciousness; it never errs on the side of excess and immoderation or perversity. The vital is dramatic, the mind is imaginative, but the body is sanity itself. And that is not a sign of its inconscience and inertia. The dull and dumb immobility of which it is sometimes accused is after all perhaps a mode of its self-defence against the wild vagaries of the mind and the vital to which it is so often called upon to lend support. Indeed it may very well be that the accusation against the flesh that it is weak is only an opinion or suggestion imposed on the body by the mental-vital who throw the whole blame upon the body just to escape from the blame due to themselves. The vital is impatient and clamorous, and if it is all push and drive—towards physical execution and fulfilment—it is normally clouded and troubled and obscured and doubly twisted when counselled and supported by a mind, narrow and superficial, not seeing beyond its nose, bound within a frame of incorrect and borrowed notions.

The body, precisely because of its negative nature—its dumb inertia, as it is called—precisely because it has no axe of its own to grind, that is to

say, as it has no fancies and impulsions, plans and schemes upon which it can pride itself, precisely because of this childlike innocence, it has a wonderful plasticity and a calm stability, when it is not troubled by the mind or vital. Indeed the divine qualities that are secreted in the body, which the body seeks to conserve and express are a stable harmony, a balance and equilibrium, capable of supporting the whole weight of all the levels of consciousness from the highest peak to the lowest abysses even as physically it bears the weight of the entire depth of the atmosphere so lightly as it were, without feeling the burden in the least.

The gods have set in this world in his beauty and glory the delightful Fire, with his chariot of delight, luminous in the way of his workings, the universal godhead, who is seated in the waters, who is the discoverer of the sun-world, who enters into the depths and is swift to cross beyond, who is rapt in his might, who bears in himself all things.

The Fire with the gods and creatures born builds by the thought of man the sacrifice in its many forms, he moves between earth and heaven as the charioteer bearing them to the achievement of their desires; he is the swift in motion and he is a dweller in the house who drives off every assailant.

O Fire, come near to us in a life rich with offspring, nourish us with energy, illumine our impulsions, animate in us the expanding powers of the Vast, O wakeful flame; thou art the aspirant strong in will for the gods and the illumined seers.*

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rigveda, 3. III. 5-7.

SAVITRI

BOOK THREE

CANTO IV

THE VISION AND THE BOON

THEN suddenly there rose a sacred stir.
A sound came quivering like a loved footfall
Heard in the listening spaces of the soul;
A touch perturbed his fibres with delight.
An influence had approached the mortal range,
A boundless Heart was near his longing heart,
A mystic Form enveloped his earthly shape.
All at her contact broke from silence' seal;
Spirit and body thrilled identified,
Linked in the grasp of an unspoken joy;
Mind, members, life were merged in ecstasy.
Intoxicated as with nectarous rain
His nature's passioning stretches flowed to her
Flashing with lightnings, mad with luminous wine.
All was a limitless sea that heaved to the moon.
A divinising stream possessed his veins,
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy:
Tissue and flesh partook beatitude.
Alight, the dun unplumbed subconscious caves
Thrilled with the prescience of her longed-for tread
And filled with flickering crests and praying tongues.
Even lost in slumber, mute, inanimate
His very body answered to her power.
The One he worshipped was within him now:
Flame-pure, ethereal-tressed a mighty Face
Appeared and lips moved by immortal words;
Lids, wisdom's leaves, drooped over rapture's orbs.

A marble monument of ponderings, shone
A forehead, sight's crypt, and large like oceans's gaze
Towards Heaven two tranquil eyes of boundless thought
Looked into man's and saw the god to come.
A shape was seen on threshold Mind, a Voice
Absolute and wise in the heart's chambers spoke:
"O Son of Strength who climbst creation's peaks,
No soul is thy companion in the light;
Alone thou standest at the eternal doors.
What thou hast won is thine, but ask no more.
O Spirit aspiring in an ignorant frame,
O Voice arisen from the Inconscient's world,
How shalt thou speak for men whose hearts are dumb,
Make purblind earth the soul's seer-vision's home
Or lighten the burden of the senseless globe?
I am the Mystery beyond reach of mind,
I am the goal of the travail of the suns;
My fire and sweetness are the cause of life.
But too immense my danger and my joy.
Awake not the immeasurable descent,
Speak not my secret name to hostile Time;
Man is too weak to bear the Infinite's weight.
Truth born too soon might break the imperfect earth.
Leave the all-seeing Power to hew its way:
In thy single vast achievement reign apart
Helping the world with thy great lonely days.
I ask thee not to merge thy heart of flame
In the Immobile's wide uncaring bliss,
Turned from the fruitless motion of the years,
Deserting the fierce labour of the worlds,
Aloof from beings, lost in the Alone.
How shall thy mighty spirit brook repose
While Death is still unconquered on the earth
And Time a field of suffering and pain?
Thy soul was born to share the laden Force;
Obey thy nature and fulfil thy fate:
Accept the difficulty and godlike toil,
For the slow-paced omniscient purpose live.
The Enigma's knot is tied in human kind.
A lightning from the heights that think and plan,
Ploughing the air of life with vanishing trails,
Man, sole awake in an unconscious world,

Aspires in vain to change the cosmic dream.
Arrived from some half-luminous Beyond
He is a stranger in the mindless vasts;
A traveller in his oft-shifting home
Amid the tread of many infinitudes,
He has pitched a tent of life in desert Space.
Heaven's fixed regard beholds him from above,
In the house of Nature a perturbing guest,
A voyager twixt Thought's inconstant shores,
A hunter of unknown and beautiful Powers,
A nomad of the far mysterious Light,
In the wide ways a little spark of God.
Against his spirit all is in dire league,
A Titan influence stops his Godward gaze.
Around him hungers the unpitying Void,
The eternal Darkness seeks him with her hands,
Inscrutable Energies drive him and deceive,
Immense implacable deities oppose.
An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
Have made a world estranged from life and thought;
The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps
Unalterable the law of Chance and Death;
On his long way through Time and Circumstance
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word:
Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.
His day is a moment in perpetual Time;
He is the prey of the minutes and the hours.
Assailed on earth and unassured of heaven,
Descended here unhappy and sublime,
A link between the demigod and the beast,
He knows not his own greatness nor his aim;
He has forgotten why he has come and whence;
His spirit and his members are at war;
His heights break off too low to reach the skies,
His mass is buried in the animal mire.
A strange antinomy is his nature's rule.
A riddle of opposites is made his field:
Freedom he asks but needs to live in bonds,
He has need of darkness to perceive some light
And need of grief to feel a little bliss;

He has need of death to find a greater life.
All sides he sees and turns to every call;
He has no certain light by which to walk;
His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide and seek;
He seeks himself and from himself he runs;
Meeting himself, he thinks it other than he.
Always he builds, but finds no constant ground,
Always he journeys, but nowhere arrives;
He would guide the world, himself he cannot guide;
He would save his soul, his life he cannot save.
The light his soul has brought his mind has lost;
All he has learned is soon again in doubt;
A sun to him seems the shadow of his thoughts,
Then all is shadow again and nothing is true:
Unknowing what he does or whither he tends
He fabricates signs of the Real in Ignorance.
He has hitched his mortal error to Truth's star.
Wisdom attracts him with her luminous masks,
But never has he seen the face behind:
A giant Ignorance surrounds his lore.
Assigned to meet the cosmic mystery
In the dumb figure of a material world,
His passport of entry false and his personage,
He is compelled to be what he is not;
He obeys the Inconscience he has come to rule
And sinks in Matter to fulfil his soul.
Awakened from her lower driven forms
The Earth-Mother gave her forces to his hands
And painfully he guards the heavy trust;
His mind is a lost torch-bearer on her roads.
Illumining breath to think and plasm to feel,
He labours with his slow and sceptic brain
Helped by the reason's vacillating fires,
To make his thought and will a magic door
For knowledge to enter the darkness of the world
And love to rule a realm of strife and hate.
A mind impotent to reconcile heaven and earth
And tied to Matter with a thousand bonds,
He lifts himself to be a conscious god.
Even when a glory of wisdom crowns his brow,
When mind and spirit shed a grandiose ray
To exalt this product of the sperm and gene,

This alchemist's miracle from plasm and gas,
And he who shared the animal's run and crawl,
Lifts his thought-stature to the Immortal's heights,
His life still keeps the human middle way;
His body he resigns to death and pain,
Abandoning Matter, his too heavy charge.
A thaumaturge sceptic of miracles,
A spirit left sterile of its occult power
By an unbelieving brain and credulous heart
He leaves the world to end where it began:
His work unfinished he claims a heavenly prize.
Thus has he missed creation's absolute.
Halfway he stops his star of destiny:
A vast and vain long-tried experiment,
An ill-served high conception doubtfully done,
The world's life falters on not seeing its goal,—
A zigzag towards unknown dangerous ground
Ever repeating its habitual walk,
Ever retreating after marches long
And hardest victories without sure result,
Drawn endlessly an inconclusive game.
In an ill-fitting and voluminous robe
A radiant purpose still conceals its face,
A mighty blindness stumbles hoping still.
Because the human instrument has failed,
The Godhead frustrate sleeps within its seed,
A spirit entangled in the forms it made.
His failure is not failure whom God leads;
Through all a slow mysterious march goes on:
An immutable Power has made this mutable world;
A self-fulfilling transcendence dwells within,
The driver of the soul upon its path,
And how shall the end be vain when God is guide?
The more the goal recedes, the more it lures;
However his mind and flesh resist or fail,
A will prevails cancelling his conscious choice.
An Influx presses from the closed Beyond
Forbidding to him rest and earthly ease,
Till he has found himself he cannot pause.
There is a Light that leads, a Power that aids;
Unmarked, unfelt it sees for him and acts:
Ignorant, he forms the All-conscious in his depths,

Human, looks up to superhuman peaks:
A borrower of Supernature's gold,
He paves his road to Immortality.
The high gods look on man and watch and choose
Today's impossibles for the future's base.
His transience trembles with the Eternal's touch.
The Immortals have their entries in his life:
The Ambassadors of the Unseen draw near;
A Splendour sullied by the mortal air,
Love passes through his heart, a wandering guest,
Beauty surrounds him for a magic hour,
He has visits of a large revealing joy,
Brief widenesses release him from himself,
Hopes of a deathless sweetness lure and leave.
His mind is crossed by strange discovering fires,
Rare intimations lift his stumbling speech
To a moment's kinship with the eternal Word;
A masque of wisdom circles through his brain
Perturbing him with glimpses half-divine.
He lays his hands sometimes on the Unknown;
He communes sometimes with Eternity.
A strange and grandiose symbol was his birth
And immortality and spirit-room
And pure perfection and a shadowless bliss
Are this afflicted creature's mighty fate.
In him the Earth-Mother sees draw near the change
Foreshadowed in her dumb and fiery depths,
A godhead drawn from her transmuted limbs,
An alchemy of Heaven on Nature's base.
Adept of the self-born unfailing line,
Leave not the light to die the ages bore,
Help still humanity's blind and suffering life:
Obey thy spirit's wide omnipotent urge.
A witness to God's parley with the Night
It leaned compassionate from immortal calm
And housed desire, the troubled seed of things.
Assent to thy high self, create, endure.
Cease not from knowledge, let thy toil be vast,
No more in earthly limits pen thy force;
Equal thy work with long unending Time's.
Traveller upon the bare eternal heights,
Tread still the difficult and dateless path

Joining the cycles with their austere curve
Measured for man by the initiate Gods.
My light shall be in thee, my strength thy force.
Let not the impatient Titan drive thy heart,
Ask not the imperfect fruit, the partial prize.
Only one boon, to greaten thy spirit, demand;
Only one joy, to raise thy kind, desire.
Above blind fate and the antagonist powers
Moveless there stands a high unchanging Will;
To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.
All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour."

August and sweet now hushed the organ Voice.
But Aswapaty's heart replied to her,
A cry amid the silence of the Vasts:
"How shall I rest content with mortal days
And the dull measure of terrestrial things,
I who have seen behind the cosmic mask
The glory and the beauty of thy face?
Hard is the doom to which thou bindst thy sons!
How long shall our spirits battle with the Night
And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
We who are vessels of a deathless Force
And builders of the godhead of the race?
Or if it is thy work I do below
Amid the error and waste of human life
In the vague light of man's high-conscious mind,
Why breaks not in some distant gleam of thee?
Ever the centuries and millenniums pass.
Where in the greyness is thy coming's ray?
Where is the thunder of thy victory's wings?
Only we hear the feet of passing gods.
A plan in the occult eternal Mind
Mapped out to backward and prophetic sight,
The cycles still repeat and still aspire.
All we have done is ever still to do.
All breaks and all rebuilds and is the same.
Huge revolutions of life's fruitless gyre,
The new-born aeons perish like the old,
As if the sad Enigma kept its right
Till all is done for which this scene was made.
Too little the strength that now with us is born,

Too faint the light that steals through Nature's lids,
Too scant the joy with which she buys our pain.
In a brute world that knows not its own sense,
Thought-racked upon the wheel of birth we live,
The instruments of an impulse not our own
Moved to achieve with our heart's blood for price
Half-knowledge, half-creations that soon tire.
A foiled immortal soul in perishing limbs,
Baffled and beaten back we labour still;
Annulled, frustrated, spent, we still survive.
In anguish we labour that from us may rise
A larger-seeing man with nobler heart,
A golden vessel of the incarnate Truth,
The executor of the divine attempt
Equipped to wear the earthly body of God,
Communicant and prophet and lover and king.
I know that thy creation cannot fail.
For even through the mists of mortal thought
Infallible are thy mysterious steps,
And, though Necessity dons the garb of Chance,
Hidden in the blind shifts of Fate she keeps
The slow calm logic of Infinity's pace
And the inviolate sequence of its will.
All life is fixed in an ascending scale
And adamant is the evolving Law;
In the beginning is prepared the close.
This strange irrational product of the mire,
This compromise between the beast and God,
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,
A spirit vast as the containing sky
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,
A god come down and greater by his fall.
A power arose out of my slumber's cell.
Abandoning the tardy limp of the hours
And the inconstant blink of mortal sight,
There where the Thinker sleeps in too much light
And intolerant flames the lone all-witnessing Eye,
Hearing the word of Fate from Silence' heart
In the endless moment of Eternity,
It saw from timelessness the works of Time,

Overpassed were the leaden formulas of the Mind,
Overpowered the obstacle of mortal Space:
The unfolding Image showed the things to come.
A giant dance of Shiva tore the past,
There was a thunder as of worlds that fall;
Earth was o'errun with fire and roaring Death,
There was a clangour of Destruction's wings:
The Titan's battle-cry was in my ears,
Alarm and rumour shook the armoured Night.
I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth
And justify the light on Nature's face.
Although fate lingers in the high Beyond
And the work seems vain on which was spent the heart's force,
All shall be done for which our pain was borne.
Even as once man came behind the beast

As surely shall that great succession be.
 Oh, yet too heavy the world's burden grows;
 The splendid youth of Time has passed and failed;
 Heavy and long are the years our labour counts
 And still the seals are firm upon man's soul
 And weary is the ancient Mother's heart.
 O Truth defended in thy secret sun,
 Voice of her mighty musings in shut heavens
 On things withdrawn within her luminous depths,
 Wisdom-Splendour, Mother of the universe,
 Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
 Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,
 O radiant fountain of the world's delight
 World-free and unattainable above,
 O Bliss who ever dwellest deep hid within
 While men seek thee outside and never find!
 Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
 Mission to earth some living form of thee.
 Let once thy wisdom move in a mortal mind,
 Thy love throb singly in a human heart.
 Once give that it may walk our earthly road,
 Thy body of beauty and celestial grace.
 Let a great word be spoken from the heights
 And one great act unlock the doors of Fate."

His prayer sank down in the resisting Night
 Oppressed by the thousand forces that deny,
 As if too weak to climb to the Supreme.
 But there arose a wide consenting Voice;
 The spirit of beauty was revealed in sound:
 Light floated round the marvellous Vision's brow
 And on her lips the Immortal's joy took shape.
 "O strong forerunner, I have heard thy cry.
 One shall descend who shall break the iron Law
 And alter Nature's doom by the Spirit's power.
 A limitless Mind that can contain the world,
 A sweet and violent heart of ardent calms
 Moved by the passions of the gods shall come.
 All mights and greatnesses shall join in her;
 Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth,
 Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair
 And in her body as on his homing tree

Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.
 A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;
 The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,
 The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
 Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
 Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,
 Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.
 She shall bear Wisdom in her voiceless bosom,
 Strength shall be with her like a conqueror's sword
 And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.
 A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
 A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
 Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
 Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will."

As a flame disappears in endless Light
 Immortally extinguished in its source,
 Vanished the splendour and was stilled the word.
 An echo of delight that once was close,
 The harmony journeyed towards some distant hush,
 A music failing in the ear of trance,
 A cadence called by distant cadences,
 A voice that trembled into strains withdrawn.
 Her form retreated from the longing earth
 Forsaking nearness to the abandoned sense,
 Ascending to her unattainable home.
 Lone, brilliant, vacant lay the inner fields;
 All was unfilled inordinate spirit space,
 Indifferent, waste, a desert of bright peace.
 Then a line moved on the far edge of calm:
 The warm-lipped sentient soft terrestrial wave,
 A quick and many-murmured moan and laugh,
 Came gliding in upon white feet of sound.
 Unlocked was the deep glory of Silence' heart;
 The absolute unmoving stillnesses
 Surrendered to the breath of mortal air,
 Dissolving boundlessly the heavens of trance
 Collapsed to waking mind. Eternity
 Cast down its incommunicable lids
 Over its solitudes remote from ken
 Behind the voiceless mystery of sleep.
 The grandiose respite failed, the wide release.

Across the light of fast-receding planes
That fled from him as from a falling star
Compelled to fill his human house in Time
His soul drew back into the speed and noise
Of the vast business of created things.
A chariot of the marvels of the heavens
Broad-based to bear the gods on fiery wheels,
Flaming he swept through the spiritual gates.
The mortal stir received him in its midst.
Once more he moved amid material scenes,
Lifted by intimations from the heights
And twixt the pauses of the building brain
Touched by the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.
The eternal seeker in the aeonic field
Besieged by the intolerant press of hours
Again was strong for great swift-footed deeds.
Awake beneath the ignorant vault of Night,
He saw the unnumbered people of the stars
And heard the questioning of the unsatisfied flood
And toiled with the form-maker, measuring Mind.
A wanderer from the occult invisible suns
Accomplishing the fate of transient things,
A god in the figure of the arisen beast,
He raised his brow of conquest to the heavens
Establishing the empire of the soul
On Matter and its bounded universe
As on a solid rock in infinite seas.
The Lord of Life resumed his mighty rounds
In the scant field of the ambiguous globe.

END OF CANTO FOUR
AND OF BOOK THREE

Sri Aurobindo

The Three Modes of Nature^{*}

TO transcend the natural action of the lower Prakriti is indispensable to the soul, if it is to be free in its self and free in its works. Harmonious subjection to this actual universal Nature, a condition of good and perfect work for the natural instruments, is not an ideal for the soul, which should rather be subject to God and His Shakti, but master of its own nature. As agent or as channel of the Supreme Will it must determine by its vision and sanction or refusal the use that shall be made of the storage of energy, the conditions of environment, the rhythm of combined movement which are provided by Prakriti for the labour of the natural instruments, mind, life and body. But this inferior Nature can only be mastered if she is surmounted and used from above. And this can only be done by a transcendence of her forces, qualities and modes of action; otherwise we are subject to her conditions and helplessly dominated by her, not free in the spirit.

The idea of the three essential modes of Nature is a creation of the ancient Indian thinkers and its truth is not at once obvious because it was the result of long psychological experiment and profound internal experience. Therefore without a long inner experience, without intimate self-observation and intuitive perception of the Nature forces it is difficult to grasp accurately or firmly utilise. Still certain broad indications may help the seeker on the Way of Works to understand, analyse and control by his assent or refusal the combinations of his own nature. These modes are termed in the Indian books qualities, *gunas*, and are given the names *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas*. Sattwa is the force of equilibrium and translates in quality as good and harmony and happiness and light; Rajas is the force of kinesis and translates in quality as struggle and effort, passion and action; Tamas is the force of inconscience and inertia and translates in quality as obscurity and incapacity and inaction. Ordinarily used for psychological self-analysis, these distinctions are valid also in physical Nature. Each thing and every existence in the lower Prakriti contains them and its process and dynamic form are the result of the interaction of these qualitative powers.

Every form of things, whether animate or inanimate, is a constantly maintained poise of natural forces in motion and is subject to an unending stream of helpful, disturbing or disintegrating contacts from other combinations of forces that surround it. Our own nature of mind, life and body is nothing else than such a formative combination and poise. In the reception of the

^{*} The Synthesis of Yoga, Chapter X (Revised Version).

environing contacts and the reaction to them the three modes determine the temper of the recipient and the character of the response. Inert and inapt, he may suffer them without any responsive reaction, any motion of self-defence or any capacity of assimilation and adjustment; this is the mode of Tamas, the way of inertia. The stigmata of Tamas are blindness and unconsciousness and incapacity and unintelligence, sloth and indolence and inactivity and mechanical routine and the mind's torpor and life's sleep and the soul's slumber. Its effect, if uncorrected by other elements, can be nothing but disintegration of the form or the poise of the nature without any new creation or new equilibrium or force of kinetic progress. At the heart of this inert impotence is the principle of ignorance and an inability or slothful unwillingness to comprehend, seize and manage the stimulating or assailing contact, the suggestion of environing forces and their urge towards fresh experience.

On the other hand, the recipient of Nature's contacts, touched and stimulated, solicited or assailed by her forces, may react to the pressure or against it. She allows, encourages, impels him to strive, to resist, to attempt, to dominate or engross his environment, to assert his will, to fight and create and conquer. This is the mode of rajas, the way of passion and action and the thirst of desire. Struggle and change and new creation, victory and defeat and joy and suffering and hope and disappointment are its children and build the many-coloured house of life in which it takes its pleasure. But its knowledge is an imperfect or a false knowledge and brings with it ignorant effort, error, a constant misadjustment, pain of attachment, disappointed desire, grief of loss and failure. The gift of rajas is kinetic force, energy, activity, the power that creates and acts and can overcome; but it moves in the wrong lights or the half-lights of the Ignorance and it is perverted by the touch of the Asura, Rakshasa and Pishacha. The arrogant ignorance of the human mind and its self-satisfied perversions and presumptuous errors, the pride and vanity and ambition, the cruelty and tyranny and beast wrath and violence, the selfishness and baseness and hypocrisy and treachery and vile meanness, the lust and greed and rapacity, the jealousy, envy and bottomless ingratitude that disfigure the earth-nature are the natural children of this indispensable but strong and dangerous turn of Nature.

But the embodied being is not limited to these two modes of Prakriti; there is a better and more enlightened way in which he can deal with surrounding impacts and the stream of the world-forces. There is possible a reception and reaction with clear comprehension, poise and balance. This way of natural being has the power that, because it understands, sympathises; it fathoms and controls and develops Nature's urge and her ways: it has an intelligence that penetrates her processes and her significances and can assimilate and utilise; there is a lucid response that is not over-

powered but adjusts, corrects, harmonises, elicits the best in all things. This is the mode of sattwa, the turn of Nature that is full of light and poise, directed to good, to knowledge, to delight and beauty, to happiness, right understanding, right equilibrium, right order: its temperament is the opulence of a bright clearness of knowledge and a lucent warmth of sympathy and closeness. A fineness and enlightenment, a governed energy, an accomplished harmony and poise of the whole being is the consummate achievement of the sattwic nature.

No existence is cast entirely in the single mould of any of these modes of the cosmic Force; all three are present in everyone and everywhere. There is a constant combining and separation of their shifting relations and interpenetrating influences, often a conflict, a wrestling of forces, a struggle to dominate each other. All have in great or in small extent or degree, even if sometimes in a hardly appreciable minimum, their sattwic states and clear tracts or inchoate tendencies of light, clarity and happiness, fine adaptation and sympathy with the environment, intelligence, poise, right mind, right will and feeling, right impulse, virtue, order. All have their rajasic modes and impulses and turbid parts of desire and passion and struggle, perversion and falsehood and error, unbalanced joy and sorrow, aggressive push to work and eager creation and strong or bold or fiery or fierce reactions to the pressure of the environment and to life's assaults and offers. All have their tamasic states and constant obscure parts, their moments or points of unconsciousness, their long habit or their temporary velleities of weak resignation or dull acceptance, their constitutional feeblenesses or movements of fatigue, negligence and indolence and their lapses into ignorance and incapacity, depression and fear and cowardly recoil or submission to the environment and to the pressure of men and events and forces. Each one of us is sattwic in some directions of his energy of Nature or in some parts of his mind or character, in others rajasic, tamasic in others. According as one or other of the modes usually dominate his general temperament and type of mind and turn of action, it is said of him that he is the sattwic, the rajasic or the tamasic man; but few are always of one kind and none is entire in his kind. The wise are not always or wholly wise, the intelligent are intelligent only in patches; the saint suppresses in himself many unsaintly movements and the vile are not entirely evil: the dullest has his unexpressed or unused and undeveloped capacities, the most timorous his moments or his way of courage, the helpless and the weakling a latent part of strength in his nature. The dominant gunas are not the essential soul-type of the embodied being but only the index of the formation he has made for this life or during his present existence and at a given moment of his evolution in Time.

When the sadhaka has once stood back from the action of Prakriti within him or upon him and, not interfering, not amending or inhibiting, not choosing or deciding, allowed its play and analysed and watched the process, he soon discovers that her modes are self-dependent and work as a machine once put in action works by its own structure and propelling forces. The force and the propulsion come from Prakriti and not from the creature. Then he realises how mistaken was his impression that his mind was the doer of his works; his mind was only a small part of him and a creation and engine of Nature. Nature was acting all the while in her own modes moving the three general qualities about as a girl might play with her puppets. His ego was all along a tool and plaything; his character and intelligence, his moral qualities and mental powers, his creations and works and exploits, his anger and forbearance, his cruelty and mercy, his love and his hatred, his sin and his virtue, his light and his darkness, his passion of joy and his anguish of sorrow were the play of Nature to which the soul, attracted, won and subjected, lent its passive concurrence. And yet the determinism of Nature or Force is not all; the soul has a word to say in the matter,—but the secret soul, the Purusha, not the mind or the ego, since these are not independent entities, they are parts of Nature. For the soul's sanction is needed for the play and by an inner silent will as the lord and giver of the sanction it can determine the principle of the play and intervene in its combinations, although the execution in thought and will and act and impulse must still be Nature's part and privilege. The Purusha can dictate a harmony for Nature to execute, not by interfering in her functions but by a conscious regard on her which she transmutes at once or after much difficulty into translating idea and dynamic impetus and significant figure.

An escape from the action of the two inferior gunas is very evidently indispensable if we are to transmute our present nature into a power and form of the divine consciousness and an instrument of its forces. Tamas obscures and prevents the light of the divine knowledge from penetrating into the dark and dull corners of our nature. Tamas incapacitates and takes away the power to respond to divine impulse and the energy to change and the will to progress and make ourselves plastic to a greater Shakti. Rajas perverts knowledge, makes our reason the accomplice of falsehood and the abettor of every wrong movement, disturbs and twists our life-force and its impulses, oversets the balance and health of the body. Rajas captures all high-born ideas and high-seated movements and turns them to a false and egoistic use; even divine Truth and divine influences, when they descend into the earthly plane, cannot escape this misuse and seizure. Tamas unenlightened and rajas unconverted, no divine change or divine life is possible.

An exclusive resort to sattwa would seem to be the way of escape: but there is this difficulty that no one of the qualities can prevail by itself against its two companions and rivals. If, envisaging the quality of desire and passion as the cause of disturbance, suffering, sin and sorrow, we strain and labour to quell and subdue it, rajas sinks but tamas rises. For, the principle of activity dulled, inertia takes its place. A quiet peace, happiness, knowledge, love, right sentiment can be provided by the principle of light, but, if rajas is absent or completely suppressed, the quiet in the soul tends to become a tranquillity of inaction, not the firm ground of a dynamic change. Ineffectively right-thinking, right-doing, good, mild and even, the nature may become in its dynamic parts sattwa-tamasic, neutral, pale-tinted, uncreative or emptied of power. Mental and moral obscurity may be absent, but so are the intense springs of action, and this is a hampering limitation and another kind of incompetence. For tamas is a double principle; it contradicts rajas by inertia, it contradicts sattwa by narrowness, obscurity and ignorance and, if either is depressed, it pours in to occupy its place.

If we call in rajas again to correct this error and bid it ally itself to sattwa and by their united agency endeavour to get rid of the dark principle, we find that we have elevated our action, but that there is again subjection to rajasic eagerness, passion, disappointment, suffering, anger. These movements may be more exalted in their scope and spirit and action than before, but they are not the peace, the freedom, the power, the self-mastery at which we long to arrive. Wherever desire and ego harbour, passion and disturbance harbour with them and share their life. And if we seek a compromise between the three modes, sattwa leading, the others subordinate, still we have only arrived at a more temperate action of the play of Nature. A new poise has been reached, but a spiritual freedom and mastery are not in sight or else are still only a far-off prospect.

A radically different movement has to draw us back from the gunas and lift us above them. The error that accepts the action of the modes of Nature must cease; for as long as it is accepted, the soul is involved in their operations and subjected to their law. Sattwa must be transcended as well as rajas and tamas, the golden chain must be broken no less than the leaden fetters and the bond-ornaments of a mixed alloy. The Gita prescribes to this end a new method of self-discipline. It is to stand back in oneself from the action of the modes and observe this unsteady flux as the Witness seated above the surge of the forces of Nature. He is one who watches but is impartial and indifferent, aloof from them on their own level and in his native posture high above them. As they rise and fall in their waves, the Witness looks, observes, but neither accepts nor for the moment interferes with their course. First there must be the freedom

of the impersonal Witness; afterwards there can be the control of the Master, the Ishwara.

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The initial advantage of this process of detachment is that one begins to understand one's own nature and all Nature. The detached Witness is able to see entirely without the least blinding by egoism the play of her modes of the Ignorance and to pursue it into all its ramifications, coverings and subtleties—for it is full of camouflage and disguise and snare and treachery and ruse. Instructed by long experience, conscious of all act and condition as their interaction, made wise of their processes, he cannot any longer be overcome by their assaults, surprised in their nets or deceived by their disguises. At the same time he perceives the ego to be nothing better than a device and the sustaining knot of their interaction and, perceiving it, he is delivered from the illusion of the lower egoistic Nature. He escapes from the sattwic egoism of the altruist and the saint and the thinker; he shakes off from its control on his life-impulses the rajasic egoism of the self-seeker and ceases to be the laborious caterer of self-interest and the pampered prisoner or toiling galley-slave of passion and desire; he slays with the light of knowledge the tamasic egoism of the ignorant or passive being dull, unintelligent, attached to the common round of human life. Thus convinced and conscious of the essential vice of the ego-sense in all our personal action, he seeks no longer to find a means of self-correction and self-liberation in the rajasic or sattwic ego but looks above, beyond the instruments and the working of Nature, to the Master of works alone and his supreme Shakti, the supreme Prakriti. There alone all the being is pure and free and the rule of a divine Truth possible.

In this progression the first step is a certain detached superiority to the three modes of Nature. The soul is inwardly separated and free from the lower Prakriti, not involved in its coils, indifferent and glad above it. Nature continues to act in the triple round of her ancient habits,—desire, grief and joy attack the heart, the instruments fall into inaction and obscurity and weariness, light and peace come back into the heart and mind and body; but the soul stands unchanged and untouched by these changes. Observing and unmoved by the grief and desire of the lower members, smiling at their joys and their strainings, regarding and unoverpowered by the failing and the darknesses of the thought and the wildness or the weaknesses of the heart and nerves, uncompelled and unattached to the mind's illuminations and its relief and sense of ease or of power in the return of light and gladness, it throws itself into none of these things, but waits unmoved for the intimations of a higher Will and the intuitions of a greater luminous knowledge. Thus doing always, it becomes eventually free even

in its dynamic parts from the strife of the three modes and their insufficient values and imprisoning limits. For now this lower Prakriti feels progressively a compulsion from a higher Shakti. The old habits to which it clung receive no further sanction and begin steadily to lose their frequency and force of recurrence. At last it understands that it is called to a higher action and a better state and, however slowly, however reluctantly, with whatever initial or prolonged ill-will and stumbling ignorance, it submits, turns and prepares itself for the change.

The static freedom of the soul, no longer witness only and knower, is crowned by a dynamic transformation of the Nature. The constant mixture, the uneven operation of the three modes acting upon each other in our three instruments ceases from its normal confused, troubled and improper action and movement. Another action becomes possible, commences, grows, culminates, a working more truly right, more luminous, natural and normal to the deepest divine interplay of Purusha and Prakriti, although supernatural and supernormal to our present imperfect nature. The body conditioning the physical mind insists no longer on a tamasic inertia that repeats always the same ignorant movement: it becomes a passive field and instrument of a greater force and light, it responds to every demand of the spirit's force, supports every variety and intensity of new divine experience. Our kinetic and dynamic vital parts, our nervous and emotional and sensational and volitional being, expand in power and admit a tireless action and a blissful enjoyment of experience, but learn at the same time to stand on a foundation of wide self-possessed and self-poised calm, sublime in force, divine in rest, neither exulting nor excited nor tortured by sorrow and pain, neither harried by desire and importunate impulses nor dulled by incapacity and indolence. The intelligence, the thinking, understanding and reflective mind, renounces its sattwic limitations and opens to an essential light and peace. An infinite knowledge offers to us its splendid ranges, a knowledge not made up of mental constructions, not bound by opinion and idea or dependent on a stumbling uncertain logic and the petty support of the senses, but self-sure, authentic, all-penetrating, all-comprehending, a boundless bliss and peace, not dependent on deliverance from the hampered strenuousness of creative energy and dynamic action, not constituted by a few limited felicities but self-existent and all-including, pour into ever-enlarging fields and through ever-widening and always more numerous channels to possess the Nature. A higher force, bliss and knowledge from a source beyond mind and life and body seize on them to remould in a diviner image.

Here the disharmonies of the triple mode of our inferior existence are over-passed and there begins a greater triple mode of a divine Nature. There is no obscurity of tamas or inertia. Tamas is replaced by a divine peace and

tranquil eternal repose out of which is released as from a supreme matrix of calm concentration the play of action and knowledge. There is no rajasic kinesis, no desire, no joyful and sorrowful striving of action, creation and possession, no fruitful chaos of troubled impulse. Rajas is replaced by a self-possessed power and illimitable act of force that even in its most violent intensities does not shake the immovable poise of the soul or stain the vast and profound heavens and luminous abysses of its peace. There is no constructing light of mind casting about to seize and imprison the Truth, no insecure or inactive ease. Sattwa is replaced by an illumination and a spiritual bliss identical with the depth and infinite existence of the soul and instinct with a direct and authentic knowledge that springs straight from the veiled glories of the secret Omniscience. This is the greater consciousness into which our inferior consciousness has to be transformed, this nature of the Ignorance with its unquiet unbalanced activity of the three modes changed into this greater luminous supernature. At first we become free from the three gunas, detached, untroubled, *nistraigunya*; but this is the recovery of the native state of the soul, the self, the spirit free and watching in its motionless calm the motion of Prakriti in her force of the Ignorance. If on this basis the nature, the motion of Prakriti, is also to become free, it must be by a quiescence of action in a luminous peace and silence in which all necessary movements are done without any conscious reaction or participation or initiation of action by the mind or by the life-being, any ripple of thought or eddy of the vital parts, done under the impulsion, by the initiation, by the working of an impersonal cosmic or a transcendent Force, by a cosmic Mind, Life, Substance or by a pure Self-Power and Bliss other than our own personal being or its building of Nature. This is a state of freedom which can come in the Yoga of works through renunciation of ego and desire and personal initiation and the surrender of the being to the cosmic Self or to the universal Shakti,—as it can come in the Yoga of Knowledge by the cessation of thought, the silence of the mind, the opening of the whole being to the cosmic consciousness, to the cosmic self, the cosmic Dynamis or to the supreme Reality, or in the Yoga of devotion by the surrender of the heart and the whole nature into the hands of the All-Blissful as the adored Master of our existence. But the culminating change intervenes by a more positive and dynamic transcendence: there is a transference or transmutation into a superior spiritual status, *triguṇātīta*, in which we participate in a greater spiritual dynamisation; for the three lower unequal modes pass into an equal triune mode of eternal calm, light and force, the repose, kinesis, illumination of the divine Nature.

This supreme harmony cannot come except by the cessation of egoistic will and choice and act and the quiescence of our limited intelligence. The

individual ego must cease to strive, the mind fall silent, the desire-will learn not to initiate. Our personality must join its source and all thought and initiation come from above. The secret Master of our activities will be slowly unveiled to us and from the security of the supreme will and knowledge give the sanction to the divine Shakti who will do all works in us with a purified and exalted nature for her instrument; the individual centre of personality will be only the upholder of her works here, their recipient and channel, the reflector of her power and luminous participator in her light, joy and force. Acting it will not act and no reaction of the lower Prakriti will touch it. The transcendence of the three modes of Nature is the first condition, their transformation the decisive step of this change by which the Way of Works climbs out of the pit of narrowness of our darkened human nature into the unvalled wideness of the Truth and Light above us.

SRI AUROBINDO

CONSCIOUSNESS is made up of two elements, awareness of self and things and forces and conscious power. Awareness is the first thing necessary, you have to be aware of things in the right consciousness, in the right way, seeing them in their truth; but awareness by itself is not enough. There must be a Will and a Force that makes the consciousness effective. Somebody may have the full consciousness of what has to be changed, what has to go and what has to come in its place, but may be helpless to make the change. Another may have the will-force, but for want of a right awareness may be unable to apply it in the right way at the right place. The advantage of being in the psychic consciousness is that you have the right awareness and its will being in harmony with the Mother's Will, you can call in the Mother's Force to make the change. Those who live in the mind and the vital are not so well able to do this; they are obliged to use mostly their personal effort and as the awareness and will and force of the mind and vital are divided and imperfect, the work done is imperfect, and not definitive. It is only in the supermind that Awareness, Will, Force are always one movement and automatically effective.

SRI AUROBINDO

The Psychic Being

THE psychic being, Chaitya Purusha, Antaratman, occupies such an important place in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, it plays such an important part in the practice of Integral Yoga, that it behoves every follower of that path to have as clear a conception of it as is possible, right at the start. Of course, like every other concept in spiritual philosophy it tends to elude the grasp of the intellectual mind and is well-nigh beyond the reach of human speech. Still, in the course of our Sadhana we have got to know it and to seize it, and mind and speech are the only instruments available to us for the purpose, to start with at any rate.

In Yoga our principal aim is to raise our human consciousness to the level of the Divine consciousness and to bring down that higher consciousness into our terrestrial existence. This is an end impossible for man to achieve without Divine Grace. His rational mind, so well equipped for the ordinary affairs of life on earth, can do no more than merely indicate the way when he seeks something beyond its usual limits. But even this is a great deal. For without the mind's first Godward turn, we remain where we are, stuck in the mire of our old earth. When the turn towards the Divine has been definitely taken, we have to look for a guide who can pilot our bark safely over what to our ordinary mind are uncharted seas. This guide, this person who is to hold the rudder in our further journeyings, is the psychic being, the Chaitya Purusha, who has even been concealed right within the heart awaiting our call. Once he has taken charge of our Sadhana, it may be said that we have made a fair start.

So, let us first try to understand who our guide is, and where he can be placed in the great Design of things. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this subject on various levels to suit our capacity and requirements of the seeker. We shall very briefly go over what he has said, and then try to indicate how best we can set about making this guidance a living principle in our Yoga.

The psychic is our inner soul, obviously distinct from our outer mind, life and body. It is the permanent being in us who employs these grosser elements as its instruments, but is itself never affected by their working. It has, however, to be differentiated, on the one hand from our *Kāmanātman*, the false desire-soul, and on the other hand from our *Jivatman*, the true central being. Of the desire-soul we shall speak in greater detail anon. It is sufficient at this stage to quote a few lines from the Synthesis of Yoga:

"The Will-in-life for its own purpose in the ignorance has created a

false kind of desire-soul and substituted it for that spark of the Divine which is the true psyche."

Man's central being is that portion of God in him which supports all the rest overlooking his evolutionary progression from birth to birth. One may say however that the central being has two forms or aspects. The higher is the Jivatman which we come to know only when we have awakened to true self-knowledge. The lower is the Antaratman, the psychic being which stands behind our three lower faculties—mind, life and body—and supports them. The higher is above the manifestation presiding from on high over the personalities evolved, while the lower stands behind individual evolution and gives it its support. To speak in a general way, the Jivatman lives in the essence and is prior to the evolution, while the Antaratman is definitely evolutionary. Therefore while our Jivatman may appear remote to us, for the present, as an eternal portion of Paramatman, the transcendent Divine, our relationship with his lesser representative, the Chaitya Purusha, is of the most intimate kind, for he is in direct charge of our evolving existence in this world, is 'a spark of the Divine Fire', a spark 'growing into a fire, evolving with the growth of the consciousness'. In the Life Divine, the psychic being is characterised as the 'flame of the Godhead always alight within us . . . a flame born out of the Divine and luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge'. In his *Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo compares this Psychic with the sun-flower, and says, 'it is the very nature of the soul or psychic being to turn towards the Divine Truth as the sun-flower to the sun'. In his *Lights on Yoga* the Master observes, "The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the child, the son of God, the Bhakta". While, therefore, this being comes out of and represents the Jivatman, it is man's true centre, the Purusha seated in his heart, who is in direct charge of his evolution; yet, let there be no mistake, in the fully awakened consciousness the two principles join together and become one.

Such is the psychic being whose help is absolutely indispensable to us in our Sadhana. We have said already that it is well-nigh impossible for man to achieve unaided the necessary self-opening and self-surrender to the Divine Mother. As soon as a man's mind has taken a definite and decisive turn, he has to awaken the psychic lying dormant in his heart, bring it to the forefront of his being and keep it there, allowing it gradually to master his mind, life and body. It should, however, be noted that this soul-personality of ours is not born in us, like Minerva, fully armed. Indeed, it is at first very weak and indistinct, and evolves quite slowly. On this subject the Master says, 'yet the soul is at first but a spark and then a little flame of godhead burning in the midst of a darkness, for the most part of it is veiled in its inner sanctum'. 'No bigger than the thumb of a man'

was the image used by the ancient seers. Even when it has begun to move forward the psychic is not always able to assert itself against the ignorant inertia of the body, the petty and often erroneous constructions of the mind and the loud arrogance of the vital nature, and in a sense accepts the outer human life with its many-sided and crude activities. But it has a subtle way of its own which ultimately prevails against the obstinacy or inertia of the lower principles. Slowly, but surely, it works to set free the divine element in them, to separate truth from error and love from egoistic desire. No doubt, in the course of this labour it has occasionally to submit to 'mistakes of action, wrong placement of feeling, wrong choice of person, error in the exact form of its will'. But in the end the voice of the soul prevails. Its long struggle culminating in ultimate victory is something that we believe in and look forward to; but the first appearance of the Divine spark against a background of obscurity and the thin but bright ray of supreme bliss that it brings down to us is familiar even to the comparative novice on the path.

We have already referred to the desire-soul, the darker counterpart of the psychic which is ever masquerading before man as his true inner self. This principle was useful enough in a former stage of evolution when vitality had to assert itself aggressively against an environment of dark inconscience. But that utility has long passed away. The mind of man which for a long time controlled his nature has definitely got tired of the game of ignorance and separativeness that it has had to play, and is preparing to hand over all power and direction to its divine counterpart, the Supermind.

The fourfold status of life that evolved in the past has been thus described in *The Life Divine*. The first stage was that of a dumb inconscient drive or urge—Tamasic. The second was characterised by Rajasic desire, eager to possess but limited in capacity. The key-note of the third was love which sought both to possess and to be possessed, both to receive and to give itself—Sattwa. The fourth is the culmination of the first three, a transcending of the Gunas, Divine unity of the Supramental consciousness. These various stages constitute 'the ascent of the divine Delight in things from its dumb conception in Matter through vicissitudes and opposites to its luminous consummation in spirit'.

But where in human existence is this divine Delight to be found? Pure Existence manifests itself in the world as substance, form of being or Matter; Consious-Force uses Vitality for its cosmic term, while Supermind expresses itself in creation by its subordinate term, Mind. The divine principle of Bliss (Ananda) must necessarily be manifested in us through some subordinate term. This term in man, the Master says, is his soul, the psychic being, which is not his mind, not his life, far less his body.

But just as we have two minds (one subliminal and the other the crude outer organ), two lives (one the subliminal and the other the gross external), two physical forms (one a subtle substance and the other crude matter), so we have in us two psychic principles, 'the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness and a subliminal psychic entity, a pure power of delight, love, joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence which we so often dignify by its name'.

In this surface soul there is no real soul-life. All the outer forms of our being—mental, vital, physical—are those of our egoistic nature. Between the inferior soul and its subliminal counterpart, Sri Aurobindo says, there are thick walls of egoism 'which have indeed gates of penetration, but in their entry through them the touches of the divine cosmic Delight become dwarfed, distorted or have to come in masked as their own opposites'. The two souls, superficial and subliminal, are coexistent. Each has its own values and standards. The psychic, by its very nature, takes an equal delight in all contacts, but it knows the standards and values of its lesser counterpart, registers its various reactions, but gathers from them strength, pleasure and knowledge. The desire-soul, left to itself, would circle in the same groove for ever. But the true Psychic in us, standing behind, is ever watchful and profits by the development and experience of the lower principles. Thus is the evolution of life on earth kept up.

At a certain stage in our Sadhana, when the mind has quieted down sufficiently and is no longer full of its own certitudes, when the vital has grown more subdued and its clamorous demands have been in part silenced, when the obscurity and inertia of the physical body does not altogether hide the inner light, the psychic comes to the front and takes charge of our Yoga. With its potent aid the Sadhaka can successfully open himself to the Divine Mother, and proceed slowly, but steadily, to make an integral and complete surrender to Her.

But, in the early part of our Sadhana, individual effort is essential. There should certainly be an attempt to surrender oneself to the Mother even in the very early stages, but it can only be an extremely slow process, as long as the mind clings to its ideas and ideals, and the vital comes forward with its demands in return for its acquiescence, while the surrender of the physical body is often a mere movement of inertia. A firm Godward aspiration, an earnest mental effort to bring about an inner quietude, calm, peace and silence, a state of unshakable faith and absolute sincerity—these are quite essential to begin with. When these have been attained and conditions are favourable, the psychic wakes up, comes to the front and takes charge of the work of self-opening and self-consecration of the

Sadhaka and his Yoga makes a real start. For, the soul is by nature 'not only willing but eager and happy to surrender'. But it should be remembered that both these processes—the opening out of the psychic and the submission of all parts of the being—are very gradual. Therefore, a certain amount of mental effort—at least aspiration and vigilance—are needed till the Divine Power takes complete possession of mind, will, life and body.

The psychic soul being a manifestation of the divine element of Ananda, its most intimate character is 'its pressure towards the Divine through a secret love, joy and oneness. It is Divine love that it seeks most, it is the love of the Divine that is its spur, its goal'. It accepts the human form of love and of the works of love, but is aware of their limitations. It is never led away by the mind's inclinations or by the life's misuse of the great truths of love, but 'calls down the entire truth of divine Love to heal their malformations, to deliver mental, vital, physical love from their insufficiencies or their perversions and reveal to them their abounding share of the intimacy and the oneness and the ascending ecstasy and the descending rapture'.

That the Chaitya Purusha is indispensable to our spiritual progress is undoubted. But it should also be remembered that a psychic awakening is not the whole aim of our Sadhana. The complete spiritual fulfilment can not come until the Supermind has descended into us. In other words, although psychic transformation is a necessary condition of the total transformation of our nature, it cannot by itself take us to the highest level of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine*: "In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the Supreme Ananda; the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came".

The same thought is expressed in a somewhat different form in the *Synthesis of Yoga*: "And yet the leading of the inmost psychic being is not found sufficient until it has succeeded in raising itself out of this mass of inferior Nature to the highest spiritual levels and the divine spark and flame descended here have rejoined themselves to their original Ether".

These limitations of the psychic are very true and we should certainly know of them. But there is no denying the fact that to us humble walkers on the path the awakening of the inner soul in us and the development of our psychic being constitute just now an all-important step in our spiritual progress.

C. C. DUTT

*The Future Poetry**

RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (3)

THE rhythmic change which distinguishes the new poetry, may not be easy to seize at the first hearing, for it is a subtle thing in its spirit more than in its body; but there is a change too, more readily tangible, in the language of this poetry, in that fusion of a concentrated substance of the idea and a transmuting essence of the speech which we mean by poetic style. But here too, if we would understand in its issues the evolution of poetic speech in a language, it is on the subtler things of the spirit, the significant inner changes that we must keep our eye. We are, however, content with saying that the word of the poet is the speech of the imagination or that he works by an inspiration. But this is an insufficient account; for imagination is of many different kinds and inspiration touches the mind at different levels and breaks out through different media before it issues through the gates of the creative imagination. What we mean by inspiration is that the impetus to creation and utterance comes to us from a superconscient source above the ordinary mentality. But it is seldom that the whole word leaps direct from that source,—ordinarily it goes through some secondary process in the brain-mind itself. And the value, character and force of the word of the poet vary according to the action of those parts of our mentality which dominate—the vital mind, the emotional temperament, the imaginative or reflective intelligence or the higher intuitive intelligence. But also there is in us a direct medium between that divine and this human mentality, an intuitive soul-mind supporting the rest, which has its share both in the transmission and the formal creation, and it is where this gets out into overt working, discloses its shaping touch or makes heard its transmitting voice that we get the really immortal tones of speech and heights of creation. And it is the epochs when there is in the mind of a race some enthusiastic outburst or some calm august action of this intuitive power, intermediary of the inspiration of the spirit or its revelations, that make the great ages of poetry.

In English literature this period was the Elizabethan. Then the speech of poetry got into it a ring and turn of direct intuitive power. Even the lesser poets are touched by it. The difference can be measured by taking the work of Chaucer or of subsequent poets almost at their best and Shakespeare at a quite ordinary level :

* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya", 1917-1920)

He was a very parfit gentle knight
and

Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth scapes in the imminent deadly breach.

Chaucer speaks from the poetic intellect and satisfies by a just and pleasing expression, in Shakespeare the words get, one might say, into the entrails of vision and do not stop short at the clear measure of the thing seen, but evoke their very quality and give us immediately the inmost vital fibre and thrill of the life they describe and interpret. It is not merely a difference in the measure of the genius, but of its source.

Shakespeare's is a highly imaged style ("Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow" etc.) but the images are not, as with so any poets, decorative or brought in to enforce and visualise the intellectual sense, they are more immediately revelatory. But he has too a clearer, a less crowded, still swifter fashion of speech in which they are absent; for an example,

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word,—

which has yet the same deep and penetrating intuitive spirit in its utterance. Or the two manners meet together and lean on each other,—

I have lived long enough; my way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,

or become one, as in the last speech of Anthony,—

I am dying, Egypt, dying; only
I here importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips.

But all have the same characteristic stamp of the intuitive mind rapidly and powerfully at work; but always too,—and this is the important decision,—that mediator between the secret spirit and our ordinary surface mentality works in him through and behind the life vision to give the vital impression, the vital psychology, the life-burden of the thought, the emotion, the act or the thing seen in Nature.

The movement that immediately followed, abandoned this power which Shakespeare and the Elizabethans had brought into English poetry. It gained something by its sacrifice, it purified the language, laid a 'clearer basis of thought, went back to ordinary speech, but it lost this Shakespearean directness of intuitive vision and spontaneous power of utterance. English poetry has got away from the Elizabethan outbreak nearer to a kinship with the mind and manner of the Greek and Latin poets, and their

intellectual descendants, though still, it is to be noted, keeping something, a subtle and intimate turn, a power of fire and ether which has become native to it, a legacy from the Shakespearean speech which was not there in its beginnings. This imaginatively intellectual basis of speech remains constant down to the end of the Victorian era.

But at the same time there emerges, at times, a certain effort to recapture the Shakespearean poetry and intensity and the awakening turn of the direct intuitive expression on a subtler and more ethereal level. The clarified intellect, observing life from above, is in itself a higher thing than the vital and emotional mind which responds more immediately and powerfully to life, but is caught in its bonds; and if the direct intuitive power can be got to work on the level just above the ordinary thinking mind where that mind opens through the full intuitive intelligence to a greater supra-intellectual mass and subtlety of light, it will bring in revelation and inspiration of mightier and profounder things than when it works behind the normal mind. Of this new effort and this new thing we get magical first indications in the pre-Victorian poets, as in Wordsworth's

And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

or, in many styles, in Keats'

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star.

Solitary thinkings such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven.
The journey homeward to the habitual self.

These lines of Keats are Shakespearean in their quality, they have recovered the direct revealing word and intimate image of the full intuitive manner, but they enter into a world of thought and inner truth other than Shakespeare's. In the Victorian poets we get occasionally the same tendency in a stronger but less happy force, for it is weighted down by an increased intellectuality. But in more recent work it is precisely the recovery of this supreme power of speech on that loftier and subtler level which to one who comes freshly to this poetry breaks out with a sense of satisfying surprise and discovery. It is not complete; it is not everywhere; it is only just rising from the acquired basis of the previous delights of expression to its own realm; but it is there in a comparative abundance and it is the highest strain of its intensities. In Meredith's

Nor know they joy of sight
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be

Its wreckings and last issue of delight.
 Dead seasons quicken in one petal spot
 Of colour unforgot.

In Phillips'

Dreadful suspended business and vast life
 Pausing
 Motionless in an ecstasy of rain.

In the Irish poets it comes most characteristically in a delicate and fine beauty of the word of vision and of an intuitive entrance into the mystery of things as in lines like A.E.'s

Is thrilled by fires of hidden day
 And haunted by all mystery.

This is a style and substance which recovers that had been lost and yet is new and pregnant of fresh promises in English literature.

It is sufficient at present to indicate this new power of language. It points to a greater thing than has yet been achieved. Shakespeare is still—though need he be always?—immeasurably the largest name in English poetry; but there remains greater things to be seen by the poet than Shakespeare saw and greater things to be said in poetry than Shakespeare said,—and here we have an indication of the way on which they lie and of the gates which open to their hiding place and own home of light and self-revelation.

RECENT ENGLISH POETRY (4)

Though the inspiring spirit and shaping substance of this new poetry has been indicated to some extent, it is necessary to dwell on it more perusingly so that we may get a closer glimpse of the things towards which we are moving. The change that is coming or at least striving to come, might be described on the surface as a great and subtle deepening and enlarging of the thought-mind in the race and a new profounder, closer, more intimate way of seeing, feeling, appreciating, interpreting life and Nature and existence.

The mind and soul of the race is now moving forward on the basis of what it has gained by a century of intellectual stir and activity, towards a profounder mood and a more internal force of thought and life. The intellectual way of looking at things is being gradually transcended or is raising itself to a power beyond itself. Mankind is still engaged in thinking and searching with an immense stress of mental power, but it is now once more in search of its soul and of the spirit and deeper truth of things, although

in a way very different from that of its past cultural ages and on the whole with a greater power and subtlety of the mind, though not as yet, but that too seems predestined to come, with a greater power of the spirit. This change, reflected in the poetry of the time is not an abrupt turn or a casting away of the immediate past from which it was born, but a rapid development of new view-points, a shedding of husks and externalities, a transformation by the entrance of a new force. The whole view and sense of existence has deepened into a greater subjectivity. For the subjectivity of the nineteenth century was a matter of the temperament, an activity of the strongly marked psychological individuality turned upon things held under the lens as an object of the intelligence; but now there are coming a universal subjectivity of the whole spirit, an attempt towards closeness and identity, a greater community of the individual with the universal soul and mind. The profounder ranges of his being are now sounded, Nature is seen more in her hidden suggestions and soul meanings, the things that lie behind the material world are almost for the first time being touched and seen with a close and revealing intimacy. The communion of the human soul with the Divine is becoming once more a subject of thought and utterance, not now limited to the old religious and personal form, but enlightened by a sense of the Infinite and Eternal which has arisen from and vivified the larger cosmic sense for which the thinking and discovery of the last century was a training. This change amounts to a revolution of the whole attitude of man towards existence; it is commencing by an extension of the intellectual stress and a consequent breaking down of its bounds.

This considerable change was intellectually anticipated and to some extent prepared in the last century itself by a strain of strenuous intellectuality among a small number of writers. Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin build for us a bridge of transition from the intellectual transcendentalism of the earlier nineteenth century across a subsequent low-lying scientific, utilitarian, externalised intellectualism, as if from bank to bank across morass or flood, over the age now beginning to come in towards us. But in the region of poetic thought and creation Whitman was the one prophetic mind which consciously and largely foresaw and prepared the paths and had some sense of that to which they are leading. Whitman by the intensity of his intellectual and vital dwelling on the things he saw and expressed, arrives at some profound sense of the greater self of the individual, of the greater self in the community of the race and in all its immense past action opening down through the broadening eager present to an immenser future, of the greater self of Nature and of the eternal, the divine Self and Spirit of existence who broods over these things, who awaits them and in whom they come to the sense of their oneness. He gets it repeatedly through his vision of the past opening to the ideal future,

The journey done, the journeyman come home,
 And man and art with Nature found again. . .
 The almighty leader now for once has signalled his wand.

And, as in the *Passage to India*, he sees in this a new voyage of the human spirit,—

O farther sail!
 Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only. . .
 For we are bound where no mariner has yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship ourselves and all. . .
 O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all seas of God?

And with a singularly clear first seeing of the ideal goal and the ideal way of conversion of the intellect and vital into the spiritual self, he calls the spirit of man to the adventure.

The circumnavigation of the world begins,
 Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
 To reason's early paradise,
 Back, back, to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
 Again with fair creation,—

In other passages too he casts forward to the ideal heart of this wider movement of man into the sense of the divine unity which is its completion, brings out the divinity of the soul in man and its kinship to the divinity of the Eternal and he foresees the coming of that kinship of God and man to conscious fruition in oneness. These passages send forward an arc-light of prophetic expression on what is at the very heart of the new movement of humanity.

The idea in these and cognate passages anticipates the new age, but the language and method are still of the poetic intellectual straining to some fullest power of its intelligence and speech-force. At the centre of English poetry, in England itself, we have found another turn of intuitive speech which is more native to that closer actuality of experience for which we seek, thanks perhaps to the special gift of the Anglo-Celtic mind, which leaps at once to the forceful, native, instinctive energy of poetic expression of the thing it has to say. The full idea of the thing we do not get in any considerable degree or range, perhaps because of the inferior turn for large and straight thinking on the great scale which is the defect of the English mind.

The citations already given to illustrate the new rhythm and language indicate also this power and thought-turn in the substance, a suggestion of the hidden and the infinite in all it touches. A few more citations from the same poets may help to bring it out with more precision. The early and greater of Phillips is of this stamp. The love of Idas for Marpessa is not

satisfied with the old forms of passion and feeling and imaginative idealism.
The very passion for physical beauty is the passion for a body

packed with sweet
Of all this world, that cup of brimming June,
That jar of violet wine set in the air,
That palest rose sweet in the night of life.

But says Idas,

Not for this do I love thee, but
Because Infinity upon thee broods,
And thou art full of whispers and of shadows.
Thou meanest what the sea has striven to say
So long, and yearned up to the cliffs to tell;
Thou art what all the winds have uttered not,
What the still night suggesteth to the heart,
Thy voice is like to music heard ere birth,
Some spirit lute touched on a spirit sea;
Thy face remembered is from other worlds.
It has been died for though I know not where,
It has been sung of though I know not when.
I am aware of other times and lands,
Of births far back, of lives in many stars.

This enlarging of the particular to meet and become one with the universal and the infinite is a very characteristic and indicative feature of this new poetry, whether in its treatments of a common human idea or emotion or of Nature. Meredith with his great force of thinking gives us the clear significance of this seeing identity of the soul of man with the hidden soul in earth-nature.

I neighbour the invisible
So close that my consent
Is asked only for spirits masked
To leap from trees and flowers.
And this because with them I dwell
In thought, which calmly bent
To read the lines dear earth designs
Shall speak her life in ours.

The effort of the poetry of this kind of inspiration may be defined by adapting another expression of Meredith's

To spell the letters of the sky and read
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.

And the fullness of that which it points to beyond itself is a movement to unite the life of the earth, not lessened, not denied, not cast away, but accepted, with its own hidden spiritual reality, the one crucial movement necessary for man before he can reach that perfection which the race shall have on its heights, when

The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain,
 Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,
 To stature of the Gods they shall attain.
 They shall uplift their earth to meet her Lord,
 Themselves the attuning chord.

The indication that we get in these and other English poets opens to a clearer totality in the two great Irish voices—Yeats and A.E. In Yeats the remarkable interweaving, whether against a background of Irish tradition and legend or a directer thought, of the earthly life of man with the unseen psychical life which, if we could only see it, as we can when we go back from the frontage of things into the inner soul-spaces, presses upon the earth-life and supports it, so that at times our world seems only its detached projection; the reading through the signs of life of the brighter letters of an ideal and eternal Beauty; the insistence, even when touching exclusively our external life, on the suggestion of finer soul-values which exceed its material meanings. The poetry of A.E. is still more remarkable. What the others suggest or give us in more or less luminous glimpses, he casts into concentrated expression from a nearer spiritual knowledge. For instance,

We bade adieu to love the old,
 We heard another lover then,
 Whose forms are myriad and untold,
 Sigh to us from the hearts of men.

He lives on the spiritual plane to which so much of this poetry is an indistinct or a less distinct aspiration and his self-expression is at times rendered remote and unseizable. This is not the frank marriage and close unity of the earth and heavens of which Whitman and Meredith speak, but a rare, high and exclusive pinnacle of the soul's greater sight.

SISIR KUMAR GHOSH

Is Sri Aurobindo New?

(A LETTER)

THE western world is often declared to be so engrossed in its new materialism that it cannot listen to any of the old spiritual messages. In a similar way the eastern world seems at times so engrossed in its old spirituality that no spiritual message that is new reaches its mind.

There are some good reasons for this unprogressive tendency. First, the spirituality of the past is really immense and its hold, therefore, cannot help being great. Second, civilisations that are, like India's, very old and have still a living continuity with their past develop an intent look backwards. Third, the accustomed meanings of spiritual terms have got impressed on our minds with such prolonged force that new complexions given them are liable to be overlooked. I was hoping, however, that there would be more than a handful who might keep on the *qui vive* for the genuinely new in spirituality and be subtle enough to understand it when it got explained in various ways and with a marvellously illuminating style as has happened in a book like *The Life Divine*. But if you declare that you have given days and nights to the consideration of Sri Aurobindo's vision and yoga and yet found nothing new, I am brought to the verge of despair. How shall I strike upon your eyes the novel shades of his thought, the original turns of his experience? Perhaps it is best to concentrate on presenting his newness under one aspect that would be the most spectacular, the most sensational.

To say that Sri Aurobindo is new is, of course, not to deny the many common factors between him and the Indian rishis and yogis that are gone. He stands grounded in India's colossal experience of God, and from the God-experience of no other country could he lead on to what is his own individual contribution to spirituality. In fact, the starting-point of his contribution is not anything unknown to the ancient scriptures: the Creative Consciousness of the eternal and infinite Divine putting forth the world-play and taking part in it for a various expression of Himself by purifying and illuminating our mind and life-force and body. In Vaishnavism and Tantricism the ideal of God's self-expression in our nature was the most openly held. But everywhere a definite irreducible quantity was recognised in which no self-expression of the Divine could take place. And that is why, on the most external plane, the fact of death was accepted as inherent in earth-existence. The triple formation of mind, life and body that makes

up earth-existence was regarded as never capable of perfection and so always to be dropped after a time. Perfection abided somewhere beyond, whither the soul was bidden to rise, either to stay for ever or else to return after a while for the sake of suffering humanity. Birth was either to be escaped from or accepted in an endless series: in both cases no birth could be such as to allow absolute perfection of the mind-life-body formation. Disease and decay and deathwards-progressing old age were always inevitable: even the hathayogis who commanded extraordinary powers of reinforcing the ageing physical system by subtle vital energy never claimed even as a possibility a complete partaking by the body in a divine physicality which by the presence of the immortal consciousness and substance would not ever die by age or disease or stroke of accident.

You must admit that since the body is our characteristic vehicle of earth-existence there can be no entire self-manifestation of the Divine here without this vehicle being thoroughly divinised and changed into stuff of the immortal divine being with its incorruptible illumination and imperishable bliss and power. No so-called natural law or necessity should compel this body to suffer disease and grow aged and finally die or remain open to accident and be a victim to "crass casualty". Disease and old age and the death consequent upon them or due to sudden violent circumstance are a stamp of undivinity—they are in the body what ignorance and falsehood and obscurity are in our mental and vital consciousness. A divinised being on earth is one in whom not merely the mental and vital consciousness but also the physical instrument has been changed into divine and therefore fully illumined and immortal and immune substance. Indeed, no such change can be wholly effected in the former without a corresponding change in the latter—unless they stand aloof from it and do not associate themselves with it for God's manifestation on earth. As soon as there is the association indispensable for manifesting God on earth, the imperfection of the body would interfere with the perfect working of the mental and vital elements for terrestrial purposes. Hence it follows that so long as the body's imperfection is accepted as in the last resort irremediable, there can be no vision by any yogi of integral transformation.

And if you give close thought to the matter, you will observe that so long as an irreducible quantity of imperfection is acknowledged, a tremendous hiatus is caused between the Divine and earth-existence. All, says the ancient wisdom, is the Divine. But if all is the Divine, then all can manifest divine values perfectly in an evolutionary scheme like our earth's: there cannot be an irreducible quantity of the imperfect in man's career through time. Once this quantity is granted in spite of the process of evolution, we automatically make a division in ultimate being: there

is the Divine and there is the undivine which cannot wholly express and be transformed into divine values. To fight clear of this dualism arises the theory of *Maya*, Illusion. Whatever holds the irreducible quantity of the imperfect cannot really be—it must be a hallucination, a strange non-being that yet seems to exist. The only thing to do for the seeker of “the one entire and perfect chrysolite”, the innate idealist in man wanting the Absolute, the Flawless, the cent-per-cent Divine, is to get rid of this illusion and pass into the formless and nameless samadhi, Nirvana, Nirguna Brahman. If we are told that something undivinisable is present in the world-elements, we may yet choose to work for the world and look upon the world as valuable because there are also so many God-expressive elements in it, but the deepest self in us will always feel discontented, unappeased, impatient and know that not here is the Grand Terminus of the soul’s evolution, the scene of its integral fulfilment. And in the long run the countries where this deepest self is most active will yield, in spite of all theories of the world as *Lila* or God’s play, to the theory of the world as *Maya*. India is overshadowed by the *Maya* theory not just because India has lost her ancient vigour: it is also because India is irrepressibly influenced by the deepest self and that perfection-haunted dweller within cannot accept as real whatever fails to admit of total divinisation. Nothing save extreme Shankarite *sannyasa*, nothing save extreme Buddhistic *tyaga* can be the logical result for a spiritual aspirant who accepts an undivinisable factor in our nature’s constituents. The pull towards the Beyond, towards utter rejection of the world for a supra-cosmic status cannot be helped—and really should not be opposed if the Divine, the wholly Perfect, is our goal. And yet even Shankara and Buddha with their illusionist attitude were drawn to world-work, to some effort at manifestation of the Spirit, at irradiation of our nature by the Secret Splendour. Here also is an instinct that is innate. But it can have justification only if our nature is really capable of divine irradiation. Between the instinct to withdraw to the Beyond because of our nature’s ultimate residue of the undivinisable with its consequent Mayic emptiness and the instinct to illumine our nature as much as possible as though it were something real and not Mayic—between these two instincts the fight must go on, with a trend more and more towards the former because the allure of the aloof Perfection to the dreamer in us of spiritual plenitude is greater than that of the world-intimate imperfect shedding of manifesting light. This fight is the history of Indian spirituality in the past. It can end only if a NEW vision is both entertained and practised—the vision of complete illumination down to the very cells of the body—the vision of the body’s utter divinisation !

Can you aver that such a vision has been in the past? Can you quote to me any yogi who has said as the Mother has said: “Physical death is no part

of our programme"?* Where in any scripture is the assertion that the completely God-realised man has a body which is no longer subject to disease, decay and death and that this body need not be given up because of the operation of any so-called Nature's law or necessity? Great yogis are declared to leave the body and depart from life at will; but this they do in anticipation of the stroke of death and the body they leave is no intrinsically incorruptible substance but generally the seat of some disease or other—cancer of the throat in Ramakrishna, asthma and diabetes in Vivekananda, blood-poisoning in Dayananda. Even that champion hathyogi, Pavhari Baba, whom Vivekananda was at times sorely tempted by his own ailments to consult and take as master, gave up his corporeal frame because of some affliction that had overtaken it. Never in the past has there been any vision of the thoroughly divinised body, immune even from accidents, as the external support for an integrally divine manifestation. If that vision put forth by Sri Aurobindo is not NEW, and revolutionarily NEW at that, tell me what significance the word NEW has !

You may be sceptical about the probability of so radical a transformation or even argue that it is not desirable. But how can you say that what Sri Aurobindo is asking for is old? Most certainly the transformation he has in mind is not "a statement in another language of the age-old cry of the mystic". It does not stand for merely a purified saintly life—not even for the magnificent selflessness of a Gautama. It is something no mystic has ever wholly dreamed of in a practical positive manner, though some intuition of it has always been vaguely at work behind all our efforts at manifesting the Divine. Despite that faint intuition, no mystic has dared to place in the forefront the transformation such as Sri Aurobindo wants. They may employ the same term but his meaning cannot be theirs. This is so because no mystic had the full organised wide-awake knowledge of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness nor the active effective experience of its mighty alchemic process. There is a tendency to think that Supermind means only "above the mind" and coincides with what other seers have discovered to be divine levels of being, higher than the mind yet lower than the "Ultimate Transcendent Reality". The Latin word "super", as used by Sri Aurobindo, has a particular significance which emerges with unique force once we look at his table of what is above the mind. He speaks of the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind and then the Supermind. The word "super" does not indiscriminately cover all these levels. It acquires, as distinguished from the word "over",

* It must be understood that life's perpetuation for the sake of an unending activity of the unregenerate human ego is not the immortality aimed at. In fact, any perpetuation as such is not desired: what is desired is the Divine in the body and the Divine's inherent deathlessness is part of the body's realisation of Him.

a shade of utter supremacy, and in his expositions the Supermind does not do service for merely the highest level of being below the "Ultimate Transcendent Reality" but is part and parcel of that Reality: only, it is the part that is turned towards creation, towards the bringing forth and harmonisation of the truths implicit in the Transcendent for world-play. There are many terms both in western and eastern mysticism which appear on the surface to contain the essence of the Aurobindonian Supermind, but they basically do not. Take the "Nous" of the Neo-Platonists. The Supermind is not this Nous: it is the consciousness of which the Neo-Platonic Nous is a weak, vague and diffuse description. All the planes above the mind are spiritual ones and are a play of luminous unity in a diversity of delight: there is natural to them what I have called in a poem of mine "the shining smile of the one Self everywhere", and they form a pattern and a harmony whose half-lit image-echo we find in our universe. All of them, therefore, are Nous—the consciousness whose multiple singlehood is the formative archetype of things here. The apex of this consciousness is the Overmind. I cannot tell whether Plotinus had a glimpse of the Overmind: perhaps it was his glimpse of it that he put into the poetic account found in his *Enneads* of the ecstatic interfusion of glorious God-forms in the spiritual world. But all this does not identify Nous with the Supermind. Just as the Overmind, the world of the greatest Gods, seems to be the archetype of our universe, so also the Supermind is the archetype of the "overmental" plane. In other words, as compared to life here the Overmind is perfection; but as compared to what is still beyond, the Overmind is imperfect Nature rounded off in general without a flawless balance and harmony between the One and the Many. The Overmind is not Ignorance: it is Knowledge, yet it is Knowledge on the way to being Ignorance. So the Neo-Platonic Nous is very distant from being "supramental"—and the proof is simply this: complete conscious awareness of the Supermind must mean the awareness and revelation of the chief secret of the Supermind which is that man's entire nature, down to his material substance, can be divinised in an immortal perfect existence on earth. Nor would such awareness and revelation stop short of a spontaneous effort to divinise and immortalise the earth-sheath. The Supermind's essence is the power it possesses to effect a total and integral divinisation. That power could never have been plumbed before, because nobody ever thought it possible to produce so fundamental a change. Not merely is Plotinus's Nous ruled out: even the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Gita were not acquainted with any direct dynamic realisation of the Supermind in relation to terrestrial Nature. They have grand hints and glimmerings of it: the Vedas' *Satyam Ritam Brihat*, the True, the Right, the Vast—the Upanishads' *Vijnana*, the all-comprehensive Knowledge—the Gita's *Purushottama* with *Para-prakriti*, the Supreme Being with His

Super-Nature. But no radically transforming intimacy with it was present. To be uplifted into it in a trance or to be lost in it and pass through its golden gate into the supra-cosmic Unknown or else to work under its glowing guidance from afar and above is not the same thing as to ascend to it and live in it with one's physical eyes open and bring about its progressive descent—as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do.

The constant day-to-day living in the light of the Supermind and the supramental descent into our whole constitution in order to shape a divine mind, a divine life-force, a divine body: this is the aim and the decisive condition of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. But there is a long and difficult way to go, a hard task of self-consecration, self-purification, self-discipline, a development on many lines and an opening to the Divine Shakti and her working on all the planes to be carried through before this decisive condition can be reached. That an opportunity might be given to others for this long training and process and a nucleus formed of seekers after this great transformation, Sri Aurobindo has let an Ashram grow around him. In this nucleus the seekers have to grow out of the habits and tendencies created by the past opposite trends of human existence, the clinging to the egoistic life and its ignorance and the revolt against life and finally the satisfaction with a half and half spiritual effort and realisation and so make themselves fit for the final movement of an integral and supramental Yoga. A successful formation of such a nucleus is evidently a necessary preliminary condition for the work Sri Aurobindo has undertaken for the world since he aims not only at an individual realisation but at a great collective descent of the highest truth into life and a new power on the earth for the liberation and perfection of mankind.

I may point out further that it is this yoga's newness that is responsible for the length of Sri Aurobindo's labour. Though forty years have passed since he set forth on the *via mystica* and though all the achievements of Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga seem compassed and though on the one hand the Nirvana of Buddha and on the other the Tantric awakening of all the occult chakras in the body appear to be realised, Sri Aurobindo still declares that his labour has not come to its end. Do you imagine that a spiritual genius like him has to continue for forty years to nearly attain what others have got within half a dozen years or so? Surely it is clear that he is at a mighty unparalleled job: there is an obvious case for considering his goal momentarily new. The period of time taken depends, where spiritual geniuses are concerned, on what their goals are and the goal of Sri Aurobindo is not reached yet because that stupendous thing—the integral descent of the Supermind—has not shown itself utterly in the most outer physical. What has already happened, however, is more significant than anything in the history of Indian spirituality, for only the

last steps in the top-to-toe descent remain and not even the first unprecedented steps that lead to these last have been taken by anyone hitherto. Even before the last hundredth step there must be the sovereign entry into the Supermind with its clear vision of total transformation: can you point to any yogi or rishi who gives signs of that clear vision, leave aside indications of the practice of the full dynamics of the supramental descent? Is there any wonder the disciples of Sri Aurobindo say that this path is new and different?

K. D. SETHNA

Love the Victor will manifest when there will be established, through the fivefold *psychological perfection*, (Faith, Sincerity, Devotion, Aspiration and Surrender) the *love of the physical* being for the Divine, and when, through *loving consecration*, there will be complete *faithfulness* to the Divine.

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Open with devotion your *vital* being to *Radha's influence* and you will get *vital peace*, the peace which leads to *transformation*.

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Through *peace in the vital* *aspire* for the *beginning of realisation*.
(Peace in the vital is at once the basis of the aspiration and the condition for the beginning of realisation.)

THE MOTHER

Spirituality and the Modern World

IV

TO become conscious of the soul as the true inner Person, the centre of one's being; to become aware of its relation with the wider universal Reality; and above all, to realise the dependence of both on the Supreme Divine, are the fundamentals of knowing through which modern man can emerge out of his ignorance into the Light of the eternal Truth. We have already seen two main currents of modern thought which indicate the general direction of man's greater possibility, and his growth into a wider consciousness. One trend is the seeking inwards and the increasing realisation of an inner realm of being apart from the surface consciousness. The other is, what might be termed, the upward quest, and the growing awareness of a wider intuitive level, which man through his own self-development can himself experience and attain. But we have also seen how both these currents of thought are failing to achieve their preconceived object of uplifting man, or of bringing to him the much-needed Light. This is because modern man has so far ignored the very first principle of his further development and of his ultimate fulfilment,—the principle of first grasping that greater Height which surpasses and transcends his present limited status. For without a firm grasp of the Higher, his attempts to raise himself to those Heights must continually fail. It is only by reaching towards the Divine, and first, grasping that of the divine nature which is closest to man's,—the soul within him, as well as the Truth-plane beyond,—that he will ever achieve the higher ascent. In this endeavour, it is his own inner experience which first brings to him the assurance of the spiritual Light, though it is ultimately the descent of the Grace which makes him aware of and actually partake of this higher and greater Reality.

First let us see what the relation is, between man and this greater Reality,—the world of Light. Ancient spiritual knowledge has revealed that in the whole universal manifestation of the Supreme, including both the seen and unseen, there are basically two Natures,—a higher Nature and a lower. It is the higher Nature which is the divine Nature, the direct manifestation of the Supreme into His triple worlds of Bliss, Consciousness and Existence. The lower Nature, on the other hand, is that which man ordinarily knows as "nature" and includes also much of what he regards as "supernatural". For the supernatural (as distinct from the purely spiritual) is not the true divine Nature, as the primitive mind thought it to

be, but rather the occult workings of a Nature that is hidden beyond the range of man's present limited outlook. The lower Nature, then, is the lowest planes—of Mind, Life and Matter—into which the Supreme had descended, or rather into which He had become involved. For it was in order that Spirit, as soul, should manifest in and through Matter, that it was necessary for Spirit, with its infinite Consciousness, Existence and Delight, to become, through each successive plane, more and more condensed and involved. And it was only at the uttermost extreme, the total involution of the Supreme in the black abyss of the Inconscient, that the turn into the outer manifestation or evolution could come.

These two triple occult planes of Descent, which thus appear as the higher and the lower, are not because of their different natures, separate and discontinuous planes. There is, in fact, a golden link in the chain which joins the lower world eternally to the higher. This link is the Gnostic or Truth Plane,—the Supramental, as Sri Aurobindo as aptly termed it,—which is directly above and beyond man's present mental status. And it is this plane, intimately connected with the divine Nature, which is the true spiritual basis of man's possible divinity. The soul of man in its terrestrial ascent, has already evolved through Matter, Life and latterly Mind. It is now Supermind which impels man's higher ascent. But since the soul is the veritable compressed seed of the Divine, it has concentrated within it the whole higher layers of the divine Nature itself. Thus the soul of man is not only the gateway through which he can experience the Divine, but it is also the very means by which he can open out into and become the higher or Gnostic Being. Just as Matter became the basis of manifestation for the lower nature, so for the divine nature to become manifest in the terrestrial evolution, Supermind must itself become the basis and stuff of a new type of being. This greater development through man's higher evolution, the attainment of spiritual status, is not therefore merely the attainment of a higher status for man only, it must also be the transformation of the entire lower basis of his present existence,—the transmutation of earth-nature and life, as well as of Mind. This is the immensity of the next evolutionary formation of which man is the terrestrial instrument. It is as instrument in God's hand, that he must take the first conscious steps of this gigantic transformation; and this demands his spiritual awakening, turn and total surrender to the Will of the Supreme Divine. If man is indeed to prove himself the true vehicle of this divine revolution in affecting the Supramental descent and transformation on earth, then he must himself first rise to the greatness of the task,—and this again rests on his own soul-emergence. For it is essentially the soul that is the latent though potent instrument of this divine transformation.

There is one fundamental question that now demands to be clarified,

What is spirituality? For the whole basis of the individual effort rests on the full knowledge and acceptance of all that this term implies. Of the higher knowledge and consciousness, which it is man's aim to attain, there are three fundamental entities forming the basis of the higher Reality in relation to the ascent of man. These are, the Psychic being, the Truth plane or Supramental and the Transcendent Divine. Thus the basis of the individual,—the true centre and fulcrum for his own higher ascent—is the soul-entity or psychic being within him. The basis, as we have seen, of the whole higher Nature, is the Truth-plane which is the real spiritual entity. And the fundamental ground of the Divine Himself is the Transcendence. Thus we can see that spirituality is not only the basis of man's next step in his evolutionary ascent, but it is also the central term in his relation with the Supreme Reality. Spirituality is in fact the fundamental link between man's inner soul and the Supreme Divine. It is the bridge on which he can alone base all his efforts for the decisive change and transformation of his baser nature. But it is precisely the ancient foundations of spiritual knowledge, especially the rich roots nurtured in the East, that modern man has swept aside as an anachronism and a redundancy, whereas in fact they are the essential link for his grasping the higher Knowledge and Truth,—God-knowledge as well as self-knowledge and world-knowledge.

It is through his separation from the ancient spiritual knowledge also that modern man has lost the true awareness of his own self-nature. Even though modern psychology has made a tentative beginning in this direction, such probings as have so far been made, have merely unearthed the lowest levels only of man's whole nature. As it was known to the ancient world, the lower nature of man, like the lower universal Nature, is fundamentally three-fold, in which the three grades or planes through which his soul has already evolved, combine to contribute each its own essential element. First there is the element of inertia and opacity, the essence derived from the staticity of Matter itself. Then there is the element of self-seeking impetuous activity,—derived from the kinetic movement inherent in Life. And thirdly there is the element of transparency and comparative purity,—from the aetherial substance of Mind with its greater freedom to move upwards towards the Light. It is really the infinite play or combination of these three fundamental qualities in all their diverse proportions and predominances, which result in the multitudinous diversity of individuals in the world, each with his own particular psychological make-up. Thus, enmeshed in the lower nature, each individual feels himself to be a separate and distinct person from everyone else. But it is merely the interplay of these basic qualities which is unique for him, and for each other individual. In order to experience the truth of this, it is necessary for one to detach oneself from the movements of the lower nature, and to see these movements as acting

apart and distinct from his real essential self. It is indeed in this very act of detachment that one comes into proximity, and can eventually become identified with his own inner spiritual nature. He then experiences the world from a new centre,—not the familiar ego-centre, but the true soul-centre of his being. This double nature in man does not really imply two distinct and irreconcilable fields, or even that one alone is real and the others merely transitory. It is not the sharp division which has been traditionally symbolised by the conception of the Flesh and the Spirit, in which one category belongs to the eternal Evil and must thus be cast off, and the other to the infinite Good. There is in fact a bridge and mediator within man himself which joins into one whole continuity his higher and lower natures. This is the dynamic soul or psychic being; and it is fundamentally this spiritual entity that is the true basis of his divine nature, and of his growth into a higher being.

Although it is the higher Nature which ultimately can effect the transformation of man, there is demanded of man himself the individual effort of maintaining a constant turn towards the Divine Will, and a persistent endeavour which will eventually mould his whole lower nature into a fit instrument and vessel for receiving the divine Grace,—the descent of the Light from above. Without this effort and endeavour, it is apparent from past occurrences of summary illumination and divine ecstasy, that the Grace when it descends even partially, cannot be sustained. There is needed an utter surrender to the Divine Will, a firm grasp of the inner Reality, and a progressive self-growth into the Truth and the Light. It is because this effort is a striving to reach the Divine, and in response, the reaching down of the Divine Himself towards man, that the whole of this endeavour necessarily bears the imprint of the higher Reality itself, the triple character of the threefold higher Nature. It can indeed be seen in the long history of man's spiritual aspiration that three distinct paths of progress have continually reappeared, sometimes separate, sometimes merged. That which has come to man through his effort in the ascent itself,—the touch of Truth and higher consciousness received through Mind,—is the Divine Knowledge, which became in consequence a powerful means or way towards experiencing this greater Consciousness. Secondly that which has come to him through the descent of the divine Grace from the Supreme Height of Bliss, touching his very heart's centre, is divine Love. It was this Love and adoration which became the potent channel for attaining that closeness and intimacy with the Divine Presence which alone can give the living reassurance of God's supreme Reality. And thirdly that which became the root or basis of these two ways,—the work or action to be done in the world,—has emerged from the Will of the Supreme. These three paths,—of knowledge, love and works,—have long been known

to ancient spiritual discipline, though in the actual spiritual accomplishments along them by the Seers and Masters of all times, there have been many travails and endeavours. It was the teaching of the Gita which enunciated clearly the fundamental truth of the essential oneness of these three ways; and which, in fact, laid down the basic principles with which they could be grasped, not as separate or consecutive paths, but as the simultaneous means of one integral movement. Not only is such a foundation of synthesis the most powerful lever for raising man towards a higher status and spiritual growth, but it also contains the essential unity and intimate relation of these three lines of endeavour with their source and origin in the Divine Reality. Although this basis was laid down as long ago as the Gita's final revelation, the subsequent history of spiritual endeavour shows, for the most part, a greater branching and divergence of these three paths, —mainly into separate and individual schools. And even each school itself became a focus for new and diverse ways of endeavour. The ancient synthesis had become lost by this splitting and disintegration, and consequently the whole effort became scattered and correspondingly weaker. It was really with the present-day awakening of Indian spirituality,—the stirring of the dynamic Spirit itself from the bosom of its ancient Mother,—that the significance of the synthesis again began to be realised. How this has culminated in the powerful synthesis of Sri Aurobindo's work, we can see fully presented in his own spiritual achievement. It is this synthesis, in fact, which holds out the radical way for the essential progress and uplift of modern man.

In the first place, the aim of the spiritual endeavour for modern man, is far wider than that laid down in the Gita. For whereas the Gita merely stressed the individual endeavour and liberation to the exclusion of the collective and whole universal salvation, the modern world demands a more integral transformation embracing the world and humanity, as well as the very earth-nature itself. Indeed the very condition of the present-day world is such that a turn towards the Light and the Divine, and a change in man's very nature is the one imperative need of the times. But the change must come from within, as Sri Aurobindo writes, "by the realisation of God in ourselves and the world, and a remoulding of life by that realisation." It is God's Will that is the root and end of all man's endeavour; and the constant striving must be the surrendering of man's narrow egoistic will to the infinite Will of God. In the whole spiritual endeavour, from the moment the soul awakens to its own purpose and status within the individual, this utter surrender to the Divine becomes increasingly essential. For having put oneself in God's hands, the divine working will necessarily stir up all the impurity of the lower nature and it is only an absolute and steadfast faith in the Divine Grace, which springs from an increasing

surrender, that can carry one safely over these difficulties. Since the divine Reality is not just a pure aetherial Spirit, but a manifold Existence, the first experience of this higher Reality as an impersonal existence, is not the only or final one. There is a higher truth in which the Spirit exists in all things, as well as all things existing in the Spirit. And even this realisation is intermediary to the supreme realisation of the Divine Reality,—that the whole world is an expression of an infinite divine personality. Thus though the basis is the impersonal Spirit, and the limbs the universal manifestation, the integral divine vision is the infinite Person, “who draws all of us to Him by His love, compels all of us by His masteries and plays His eternal play of joy and strength and beauty in the manifold world” (Sri Aurobindo). The individual effort is essentially a threefold one,—as we have seen it must indeed be. Firstly there must be the knowledge, awareness and consciousness of the Divine; and a seeing and recognition of His Truth. Secondly there must be the aspiration in the heart for spiritual development and transformation, a self-opening towards the Light and a plasticity of the being in God’s hands in all our actions. And thirdly there must be the total surrender to the Will of God, in every movement and every plane of consciousness. This, briefly, is the basic condition of the synthesis for the individual endeavour, that has been laid down for us by Sri Aurobindo.

That all such spiritual endeavour is no alien movement for modern man, but the very need of his future existence, can be seen in the underlying trends of modern thought itself. For it is really modern man who is himself overshadowing the very significance and direction of this movement. Thus, in spite of the distortion and degradation of modern creative expression, there can be seen as its very root and inspiration, the wider tendency to integrate two fundamentals, which are in fact inherent in man’s own spiritual path. It is a striving to focus into one integral vision the dual lines of a sympathetic identification or feeling-into things, and a calm impersonal detachment. The very essence of this endeavour is itself the aim of man’s spiritual discipline, that of a wider seeing. But it is apparent that modern man is failing utterly to achieve this higher and wider vision. For he has so far failed to realise that such impersonal detachment coupled with insight, must necessarily spring from the inner soul centre, and not from mind. This cardinal error can again be seen more clearly in the present-day trends of modern thought to create a synthesis. For synthesis is essentially a soul-movement, a fundamental condition of the soul. But modern man in his attempt is merely devising a mentally constructed synthesis, which is really a mixture, and no true synthesis. Instead of bringing clarity and light, such thought-constructions are only bringing conflict and confusion. Whereas mind tends to analyse, break up into finitudes and grasp partialities, the soul, being more expansive and penetrating, seeks to grasp the wholeness

as well as the essence of things. It is only in the higher reaches of mind that one can see the beginnings of this function of seizing the wholeness of thought, as, for example, in the intuitive. This striving for synthesis through modern thought, is essentially the straining of soul to impress itself indelibly on the modern mind, so that man may recognise and grasp this central and emergent factor of his being. It is only thus that modern man will create a new vision.

It is now clear that for Soul to become the established base and centre of all man's actions, there must be the turn and aspiration towards the Highest Reality,—the Supreme Divine. And it is clear also that the emergence of Soul and aspiration towards the Divine, both rest on the effort and endeavour of man himself, his own acceptance and embrace of spirituality,—that is, the spiritual knowledge, the spiritual aspiration and the spiritual endeavour which this term implies. It is such integral spirituality, now emerging from the East, that is the real pressing need of this modern age.

N. PEARSON

Review

Vladimir Solovyov. By Friedrich Muckermunn.

Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages. By E. Lampert.

THE divinisation of man has been a very ancient dream and aspiration, the earliest preoccupation of man and his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation. In the latter half of the 19th century we find several prophetic minds formulating the ideal of a divine humanity, and perhaps the most remarkable of them is the great Russian seer, thinker and sage, Vladimir Solovyov. A child of his age, he pretended to be an atheist at the age of twelve. He once wrote to his cousin that his idea was the "work of transforming the world"; and he had never relinquished the idea when he died in 1900 at the early age of forty-seven. It was not Western thought that gave him the idea of divine humanity; he had three visions which enabled him to enter into the mysteries of the spiritual life. The Vision appeared to him for the first time when he was only nine; at the solemn mass on the Feast of the Assumption, he had beheld Her whom he "cannot and will not name." At the age of twenty-two under the dome of the British Museum he had *the Vision* for the second time:

Thrice hast thou shown thee to me face to face,
No pallid thought fashioned thy living form.

In London the Vision told him to go to Egypt. There he shook off all traces of Western rationalism and empiricism, and continued in his time the word of Divine Humanity begun by the Greek fathers. The Fourth Gospel, the Apocalypse, the Egyptian fathers taught him the art of theurgy, of man as the creator of gods and idols, of Isis identifying herself with the *Terra Aegyptiou*, where even the mummies symbolise man's longing for immortality. He aimed at synthetising all knowledge in Christianity. In his "Lectures on Divine Humanity" (1877-81) he gave a statement of his own doctrine.

Western Europe tried to create man without God; the East aspired towards God ignoring man. Therefore the East needs the West and its faith in man; and the West needs the East and its faith in God. Both coalesce in the idea of Divine Humanity. The cosmic forces to which man and his world are exposed here on earth, represent "*die schlechte Unendlichkeit*" (the evil infinity), the *Tohuwabohu*, the chaos. As a spiritual being man bursts the revolving circle of nature. He becomes a citizen of another world, in unity with the Absolute Being from whom he sprang in the creation. Christ incarnates in Himself the two natures of God and man. But if there is a God-man, there is also His reflection, the Man-god, a living organism united with the Deity. Man, therefore, is the centre of the "Other Absolute", of the world which Schelling had described as God's self-representation. He is to respond to God as His other self. Man, then, is the mediator between God and nature. It is his vocation to complete the work of Divine-human redemption; and he is to do this by the incarnation of the wisdom.

To find a philosophical basis for this doctrine he turned to Hegel, the most influential western thinker of modern times. But he claimed to have found out the fundamental errors of Hegel's logic and developed an organic logic and metaphysic of his own. "If I say 'I am' or 'That thought is' I use the parts of the word 'to be' in totally different meanings. In the first proposition, I coordinate the predicate 'be' with a subject; in the second with the predicate of the subject." For Solovyov Being is a universal subject taken in extension; not as Hegel had decreed, in comprehension. Solovyov holds, with Schelling, that our immanent dialectic constitutes an absolute activity, since the notion can only exist in our consciousness, and is therefore after, and not before nature. God is the positive nothing as against Hegel's negative nothing. The distinction between Hegel and Solovyov seems to correspond to the distinction Sri Aurobindo has drawn between the purely noumenal and the idealistic philosophies both of which recognise Mind alone as the creator of the worlds. According to Hegel, the world is only a movement of Thought: if there is an Absolute, it is aloof from all relations and irreconcilable with a world of relations. The idealistic

interpretation of Solovyov supposes a relation between the Truth behind and the conceptive phenomenon in front, a relation which is not merely that of an antinomy and opposition. According to him there is no radical dualism between God and nature. Nature serves as *hypokeimenon* for the Incarnation and for the realization of God. But the universe is a plurality, how can it be reduced to new unity? That is the problem which Solovyov tried to analyse in his "Lectures on Divine Humanity." If, he argues, the plurality of things were absolute, no relation to the Absolute would be possible.

All things, therefore, must be united organically. But the more a being is organically universal, the more it is at the same time individual. "The universal organism, which expresses the absolute content of the divine principle, is *par excellence* an individual, a special being." This reminds us of what Sri Aurobindo has said in *The Life Divine*: "To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe." (Vol. II, p. 453). According to Solovyov, this individual being, or the realized expression of the absolute God, is typified in Christ.

He also finds the root of evil in the separative consciousness. "Nature, in its opposition to God, is merely another position or, rather, permutation of certain essential elements which substantially remain in the divine world." But the third sphere of divine existence, the soul originates by creation, and "in so far as the divine will has rallied itself to the ideas, it has ceased to be divine and is being determined by these ideas." While all things in the divine world are integrated, each thing here affirms its particularity and isolation; and in this rupture of the divine context lies the root of evil. Since the world soul is free to choose the object of its longing, it can aspire to possess things in its own name, *eritis sicut Deus*. It so becomes a particular element, dissolves the organism and causes suffering and chaos.

The cosmic process and history are the great drama, the Divine Comedia, in which the potential reintegration of the world-soul with God is rendered actual. The world is a uni-totality in the process of becoming. The first period of the process is achieved with the creation of man. Man, then, is the Absolute in process of becoming. Even the natural man is a theophany. In so far as man received the aptitude to become subject to divine action, history ascends to the scene of theogony. The Incarnation of Christ is the ultimate and crowning event in the process which follows upon a number of preceding theogonies. In him the divine and material elements are united by man's third principle, the purely human. In accordance with orthodox dogma, Solovyov teaches that Christ's divine personality

contains two natures and possesses two wills: "By overcoming the three temptations in the desert, Christ divinises his humanity after having humanised his divinity." It is mankind's task to imitate Christ's incarnation by founding a universal and collective God-manhood, or divine humanity. This will be the real universal Church, for which the Church in history serves as a hallowed vessel, in the process of incarnating divine wisdom.

As the method of achieving this ideal of divine humanity Solovyov developed his ethics first, in the "Critique of Abstract Principles" and later in "The Justification of the Good." As in his logic and metaphysics, Solovyov starts with Hegel but goes beyond him, so also in ethics he starts with Schopenhauer and Kant but goes beyond them and raises ethics to the spiritual plane. According to Schopenhauer, sympathy is the fundamental ethical feeling. The individual will is immoral if it increases the suffering of others, or also if it is merely indifferent toward it. It is moral if it feels another's suffering as its own and seeks to alleviate it. From the standpoint of sympathy Schopenhauer gave his psychological explanation of the ethical life. Solovyov agrees with Schopenhauer that sympathy or pity is the material principle of morality; but this is how it acts in the human level: in the higher spiritual level all truly ethical action is a spontaneous outflow of love which is a much deeper thing than pity. Between 1892 and 1894 Solovyov meditated upon the deepest meaning of love, and described finding it in the restoration of God's image in man in his "The Meaning of Love". God, says the Bible, created man in his own image. By loving man we love God, and the service of man flows spontaneously from that divine love. Thus for him ethics becomes the great art of salvation, the royal road to the *apokatastasis ton panton*. This is the dominant theme of "The Justification of the Good" published fifty years ago.

Solovyov agrees with Kant that suffering consists in the dependence of our will upon something alien, also that freedom of the will constitutes the essence of morality. But their paths part immediately after this promise. According to Kant the freedom of the will consists in not following any external aim or natural impulse but some rule or maxim given *a priori* by the reason. According to Solovyov this is only relative freedom; this moral discipline only helps men to put under control his lower impulses; it implies merely negative limitation of human conduct, for formal reason cannot give the positive content of the good. It is only by rising to a higher consciousness and knowledge that we can know what is the positive good to be pursued in life. "To do what we ought to do presupposes the knowledge of what is." Positivism can never assure man of the basis of his ethics. In order to recognise what is, the separate thing must be seen in its relation to the whole—that is, to the uni-totality. This is a cognition which cannot

be mediated by experience. Truth, therefore, must reside in the Absolute Being alone, and man can have true knowledge only when he enters into communion with God. This Solovyov terms mysticism. In the act of cognition man represents the other self of the Absolute, in which he ascends through the process of divinisation. Cognition is itself part of *Theosis*, the integration of man to God. The idea of divine hypostatis recurs in Solovyov's notion of man. The personal ego holds something other than itself to which it should surrender itself; it is this surrender that constitutes man's transfiguration.

Solovyov tried to extend his theoretical metaphysic into the practical sphere: it ends in the messianic advocacy of the new synthesis in history. Divine humanity will be achieved through the incarnation of divine wisdom and the realisation of uni-totally in becoming is the mission of Russia. Solovyov recognised that Christianity might become the great positive social force of the future, but it was not Dostoevsky's Orthodox Church; he knew that Rome also was needed. During the eighties, the second period of his life, the idea of free theocracy was uppermost in his mind. The Slavophile adherence to nationality as the most effective factor in the philosophy of history was weakened by Leontiev's insistence on Byzantism as the decisive force that moulded the Russian spirit. Dostoevsky, the great teacher of Solovyov, made "The Brothers Karamazov" an ardent plea for the Church as the positive social principle. Federov's "Philosophy of the Common Task" began to stir the minds of the elect with the idea of an active apocalypse, the common work of "raising the dead." The impressions which Solovyov had gained from the revolution in thinking were deepened by events. When Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, Solovyov pleaded in vain for the pardon of the plotters. Doubts concerning Russia's spiritual strength gravely disturbed the philosopher. If the new emperor did not by mercy prove the Christian and superhuman character of his reign, then Russia was not the ideal empire that could sanctify the world by free theocracy; she could only be put on the path towards the goal. But in the last resort it was the desire to realise the work of the incarnation of wisdom that attracted Solovyov towards Rome, since it is by accepting the primacy of this incarnation that Russia will be able to realise the free theocracy which leads to the Kingdom of God as identified with divine wisdom. Here we find Solovyov not as a seer, but as a thinker making all sorts of speculations with his ever active mind. Rome represents in his speculation the divine Sacerdos, Russia the Kingdom; he himself is the prophet who will unite them.

In 'La Russie et L' Eglise Universelle' written in 1889, Solovyov expresses his idea concerning the practical work to be accomplished towards the union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. His application of this

line of thought to Russia's historical mission, and his theocratic messianism in general, are filled with striking speculations. The Messianic force of the West has exhausted itself in two attempts to create God's Kingdom on earth, Constantine's and Charlemagne's. To succeed where the West had failed was Russia's vocation. Solovyov tries to clear Filofie's idea of Moscow the Third Rome, of its nationalistic trappings. He defines Russia's task as that of uniting the first two Romes, Rome and Byzantium, in a synthesis of Social Christianity.

In the nineties certain apocalyptic presentiments took possession of him. His restless mind felt the strain of overwork. A neglect of worldly interests and his unhappy love for Sophia Martinova intensified the crisis. His theocratic ideas had brought him into dangerous proximity to practical politics, so inimical to spiritual life. Theocracy, he found, presupposes the individual's personal sanctification, and this insight led him to the problem of evil. He perceived the atmosphere to be filled, increasingly, with ideas that falsified the good. Marxism started its public career with the facile reduction of all problems to that of social justice and with compulsory unification of mankind as its aim; Nietzsche was the skilful forger of the Pauline idea of the super-man; Tolstoy, the vendor of a pale Christianity that denied the divinity not only of mankind but even of Christ himself.

In 1898 Solovyov travelled to Egypt for the second time. There he had diabolical visions: Anti-Christ appeared to him: he became aware of an acceleration in the march of history. His intense preoccupation with the idea of the good had, by this time, rendered his mind sensitive to contemporary falsification, so that he felt he must expose their fallacies to a credulous mankind. This is the theme of his last work: "War, Progress and the End of History, including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ." Solovyov singles out Tolstoy's tepid Christianity as the special target of attack. Tolstoy held that the Parable of the Husbandmen contains his own main idea: that evil should not be resisted by force.

In "Three Discussions" Solovyov, as Mr. Z. replies to the Prince (Tolstoy), "Evil really exists"; it represents the victory of lower over higher being; it is not a mere "deficiency of the good." To deny it, and to promise its disappearance as the result of some future social or personal behaviour of man—as Tolstoy taught—is the statement of an adversary of Christ, especially since this attitude denies, with the principle itself, the remedy promised and prescribed by Christ, the resurrection of man. If resurrection is not admitted in its central position, then "our (i. e., Tolstoy's) Kingdom of God is but an arbitrary and purposeless euphemism for the kingdom of death." Solovyov *alias* Mr. Z. reproaches the Tolstoyans for their interpretation of the Parable of the Husbandmen, thus "arbitrarily casting out from the Gospel that which is the most essential part of it:

the reference to the son and heir in the parable in which is given the true standard of relation between man and God." God, our Lord, must be a living Lord who does good deeds himself, "not a remote Incognito.... the God of this age."

Solovyov feared that Tolstoy's deceptive attraction, and that of other religious innovators would in our time and for large parts of mankind prove too strong. The coming Anti-Christ would incarnate all these false teachings about God and man. He would appear as the benefactor of mankind. Solovyov's idea of the Anti-Christ was simple; the general union of mankind was man's highest earthly aim in preparation of his redemption; but achieved without God it represented the deepest possible falsification of the good. Believing, then, that the Incarnation of Wisdom was impossible in this our aeon of history, Solovyov felt that he had nothing left to achieve on earth. He retired to a friend's estate near Moscow, received Extreme Unction from Father Belyaev, an Orthodox priest, and employed the last hours of his life in prayer for the Jews. He died in July 31, 1900.

The writer of this illuminating biography, Father Muckermann, met the real Anti-Christ when undergoing persecution at the hands of the Nazis in Germany; and with the destruction of Hitler he felt justified in hoping that the day of the Lord was near. Solovyov himself expected that it would come by Christianity becoming a great positive social force through the reunion of the Orthodox and the Roman Churches. He felt that without this union, Russia would be too weak to undertake the spiritual unification of mankind and to realize Divine Humanity on earth. If she tries she will become Anti-Christ, who is said to deceive even the elect. She will spoil her mission and leave mankind as disunited as before. Only a strong social Christianity will unite mankind, and without the total absorption of Russia's schismatic dreams into this Divine Body on earth, nothing will be accomplished for the greater happiness of the human race. The message of Nietzsche was thus perverted by Hitler and the message of Marx seems on the way of being similarly perverted today.

Nicolas Berdyaev, a distinguished disciple of Solovyov, has continued the work of his master; with the doctrine of the divine humanity he amalgamates different currents of modern thought: "Feuerbach's and Marx's struggle against man's absorption into illusory religious and socio-economic relations; Nietzsche's depreciation of legalist morals and his idea that man should be more than man, the idea which, for Berdyaev, is nothing but a modern and possibly too bold formulation of Pauline theology; and finally Freud's psycho-analysis which, if reduced to its true proportions, is reconcilable with the Christian teaching regarding man's fallen and contradictory nature. Berdyaev does not take into account how the conception of a divine humanity has become the subject of great poetic utterance in our

time. Thus referring to the one crucial movement necessary for man before he can reach that perfection which the race shall have on its heights, Meredith writes,

The vile plucked out of them, the unholy slain,
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,
To stature of the Gods they shall attain.

In the early twenties, that is, the inter-war period of great ideological fluctuation Nicolas Berdyaev seemed to emerge from the chaos as the mediator between East and West, the prophet of a New Age. In his book *The End of our Times*, he prophesies the breakdown of modern civilisation, because he can find no meaning in any life in which the central principle is not a mystic communion with God. He loathes alike the acquisitiveness of capitalist society and the heathenism of communist Russia.

For Berdyaev, as much as for his teacher Solovyov, the world is the "Absolute in becoming" and man is potentially God. These ideas can be based upon Scriptural promises, e.g. "this mortal must put on immortality" "mortality swallowed up of life" "our bodies in humiliation shall be changed and conformed to His body of glory". But few except the few eminent Catholic divines, such as Matthias Scheeben (in his interpretation of St. Paul, he says, "Man is of Divine Race"), have drawn from them far-reaching conclusions that Solovyov and his followers deem reconcilable with Christianity.

A. B.

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